

The Fifth Battalion  
Highland Light Infantry  
1914-1918













THE FIFTH BATTALION  
HIGHLAND LIGHT INFANTRY  
IN THE WAR  
1914-1918









COLONEL F. L. MORRISON, C.B., D.S.O., V.D.

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Highland Light Infantry  
in the War  
1914-1918



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TO THE MEMORY OF  
THE OFFICERS, WARRANT OFFICERS,  
NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND MEN OF  
THE FIFTH BATTALION HIGHLAND LIGHT INFANTRY  
WHO FELL IN THE WAR 1914-1918



## PREFACE

THE 5th Highland Light Infantry was originally known as the 19th Lanark Rifle Volunteers, one of the Volunteer units raised in 1859. In 1880, it became the 5th Lanark Volunteers. The connection with the Highland Light Infantry began in 1887, when it was named the 1st Volunteer Battalion Highland Light Infantry, a detachment of which served in the South African War. On the formation of the Territorial Force in 1909, the present name was adopted. The old history of the unit is contained in the Records of the Scottish Volunteer Force 1859-1908, by the late Lieut.-General J. M. Grierson, C.V.O., C.B., C.M.G.

This book deals with our record of service in the war 1914-1918, and we feel we need only say three things in the Preface :

1. The book is published privately for those who served with us and others interested.
2. It has been written by officers of the Battalion who were with us during the period of which they write.
3. It is written to the memory of our gallant comrades who fell and who themselves did so much to make this History.





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## CHAPTER I

### FROM MOBILISATION TO THE EAST.

THE period from the date of mobilisation to the date on which we began our active service experiences we propose to pass over quickly, as the events which happened then seem now of small interest to those coming later.

With orders prepared carefully in peace time, mobilisation went smoothly. The Normal School, Glasgow, became a barracks and a place for the busy public of the New City Road to gaze at with interest.

Within a week our Brigade found itself at Dunfermline, and a few days later we were at Leven, with two companies on duty at the docks at Methil. The Leven companies did uninterrupted training, the Methil companies uninterrupted guards, and to the credit of the latter no one was drowned on these inky nights in the docks. It was there one night a small but gallant officer was going his rounds. One sentry was posted in mid-air on a coal shute, and to challenge persons approaching his post was one of his duties. On the approach of the officer there was no challenge, so to find the reason of this the officer climbed up the ladder and found the sentry, who explained he had seen something "right enuff," but thought it was "one of them things they tie ships to"—in other words a bollard.

The Army authorities had not then become prolific publishers of training pamphlets; training therefore was in accordance with the Red Books previously published, which

## 2 THE 5TH HIGHLAND LIGHT INFANTRY

meant that we trained for open warfare. Bombs, Trench Mortars or Rifle Grenades we never saw, still the training was invaluable and we became a very fit battalion.

All ranks have happy memories of the many kindnesses shown there by the good people of Leven and Methil, but in spite of the pleasures of home soldiering, being then enthusiasts, we thought we had been forgotten and longed for orders to proceed overseas.

Early in May, 1915, we gathered that we would soon be going abroad. It was then we heard that our Division would be known as the 52nd (Lowland) Division, and our Brigade, consisting of ourselves, the 6th and 7th H.L.I., and the 5th A. & S.H., as the 157th Infantry Brigade. Anticipating our move, the G.O.C. Division, General Egerton, lectured the officers at Markinch on warfare in France. He referred to us embarking on the greatest adventure of our lives; to many attending the lecture it was also their last. In spite of the lecture we found ourselves bound for the East.

On May 19th, Major T. L. Jowitt, Captain J. D. Black and eight subalterns with their trusty batmen left Leven for the South and they were lost to us for a month. This was owing to limited boat accommodation. The Battalion, under command of Colonel F. L. Morrison, moved from Leven on May 24th, with, we think we can say, the best wishes of the inhabitants. The next day found us at Plymouth boarding the *Transylvania* for her first voyage as a troopship. The transport section under Lieut. W. L. Buchanan sailed by another steamer. In addition to ourselves the *Transylvania* carried the 6th and 7th H.L.I. and about 100 unattached officers. It was a tight fit.

The ship was detained from sailing until our pith helmets arrived on the 26th, when, at 10 o'clock on a clear moonlight night, we steamed away escorted by two T.B.Ds. The Bay was crossed in calm weather. Gibraltar passed on the 30th



and Malta reached on the 2nd June. Our clothing, consisting of the ordinary drab khaki, now began to prove unsuitable for a hot climate.

At Malta parties were allowed ashore while the ship coaled. The Maltese methods of coaling are worth seeing. A goodly proportion of the coal is dropped intentionally into the sea, as it is being carried from the lighters to the bunkers. After coaling is finished, a fleet of rowing boats with drag-nets collect the ill-gotten coal from the bottom of the sea. It was our introduction to the oriental mind.

On the 5th June we entered the harbour of Alexandria, threading our way through a fleet of transports and other vessels such as the place had never known in peace time. Disembarking we entrained to Aboukir some ten miles away on the Bay of that name. A camp was pitched near the sea, where abounded scorpions, snakes, flies, beetles and mosquitos. Leave was given to visit Alexandria, and this, to those visiting the East for the first time, afforded endless interest. It was there we learned to scatter the unfortunate natives with "imshi" or stronger, and what "mafeesh" meant.

The officers were fortunate in securing for their mess the cool verandah of a solitary house round which the camp was pitched. The house, which was unoccupied, was said to be owned by a Frenchman in Cairo. He arrived one day with a bride on his arm—he had just been married—not knowing that the district was now crowded with troops. He had intended to spend the honeymoon at his sea-side residence. With all a French gentleman's courtesy he made the officers welcome to his house and sought his honeymoon elsewhere.

We found ourselves aboard the *Transylvania* again on the 12th June, and sailed at dusk. Our course was Northwards, so now, we thought, we were in for the real thing. Gallipoli and the Turk would know us in a few days time.

To travel hopefully, reflected R. L. Stevenson, is better than to arrive. Ere Crete was passed the ship put about and steamed for Alexandria again. A wireless had been received recalling us to Egypt, the reason for this *volte face* being, we understand, congestion at Mudros, the advanced base.

Alexandria on our return was dimmed in the heat and choking in the sand clouds of a khamsin. This wind blows off the desert and man is almost prostrate in its scorching blast. We had met a particularly hot one—Alexandria had not known its like for years. The move back to Aboukir was therefore very trying. We were now rejoined by the Transport Section, and Major Jowitt and his party also returned. They had gone direct to Mudros in the *Mauretania*, where an attempt was made to post them to the 29th Division. The compliment was declined on the ground that their unit was in the offing. After transshipping to the Donaldson liner *Saturnia*, which was nearly hit by bombs from an aeroplane, they were sent to Alexandria by the *Minnetonka*.

About this time Colonel Morrison had the pleasure of dining with the Sultan of Egypt at his Palace near Alexandria, his tartan slacks attracting considerable notice.

On 28th June we again embarked for Gallipoli, this time on the *Menominee*. The Transport Section were left behind at Aboukir as there was no room for them in the small sector occupied by our troops in Gallipoli. We were all aboard and ready to sail by 4 p.m. All aboard did we say? Then where's the Padre? Last seen going through the town with the intention of making a few final purchases, he was now nowhere to be found. As the relentless ship cast off and moved down the harbour, his tall and for once dismayed figure came in sight on the quay. Too late. Too late. All ranks crowded to the side shouting advice and sympathetic cheers.



OFFICERS OF THE BATTALION. GAILES CAMP. JULY 1914.

2nd Lt. R. M. Miller, 2nd Lt. T. A. Lyffe, Lt and Q.-M. T. Clark, Lt. A. B. Currie, Lt. T. S. S. Wightman,  
 Capt. D. E. Baird, 2nd Lt. E. M. Leith, Lt. N. R. Campbell, Lt. K. Macfarlane, 2nd Lt. J. F. Moir,  
 2nd Lt. J. E. Milne, Lt. R. H. Morrison,  
 Capt. J. B. Neilson, Capt. H. C. Macdonald, Major A. M. Downie, Major D. A. C. Reid, C.F., Col. F. L.  
 Morrison, V.D., Major T. L. Jockitt, Capt. J. R. Simpson, Capt. John MacDonald, Capt. George Morton, Jr.  
 2nd Lt. J. W. Main, 2nd Lt. Lewis MacLellan, 2nd Lt. J. W. Malcolm, 2nd Lt. E. T. Townsend.



But the Padre was not to be denied. With the resource of the hero in the film play, he routed out a motor boat and came speeding after us. Down the ship's side hung a rope ladder to which clung a couple of natives in a small boat. Overtaking us in great style, the Padre leapt into this and essayed the ladder, but his pith helmet got in the way and his cane and parcel of purchases burdened his hands, so he threw the lot to one of the natives and began the precarious ascent. Half way up a swing of the ladder brought him under a shoot of water from the ship's side, and at the same moment an extra burst of cheering from the decks drew his attention to the native who, as the best way of carrying the helmet, had good humouredly donned it. It was a trying situation for any man, but the Padre did full justice to the occasion and was eventually hauled on board amid wild enthusiasm.

In spite of submarine scares the voyage up the Aegean Sea was a pleasant one. By day the succession of rocky islands (among these Patmos, where St. John was inspired to write his Revelation) shining in the sea like jewels in an azure setting, marked our progress and recalled their ancient story.

In the evening impromptu concerts were held, at one of which, on the fo'c'sle decks the pipers played "The 5th H.L.I.'s Farewell to Aboukir," composed by Pipe Major Thomson. Can its plaintive harmonies still be heard, or did they perish with him when he fell just ten days later?

At dawn on the 1st July we sighted Lemnos island. Soon we were lying in Mudros Bay among over 120 ships, British and French of all sizes and types, from battleships to submarines, and from great ocean liners to trawlers, all safely at anchor in this wonderful natural harbour. Now picks, shovels, rations and extra ammunition were issued, and in the afternoon of the next day the destroyer *Racoon* took off



Brigade and Regimental Headquarters with A and B companies, followed by the sweeper *Whitby Abbey*, with C and D companies under Major Jowitt. Singing and cheering we passed down the long line of shipping to the harbour mouth, then into darkness and silence, bound at last to meet the enemy.



## CHAPTER II

GALLIPOLI—TO 11TH JULY, 1915.

THE main objects the Allies had in view in their operations at Gallipoli may be briefly stated :

1. To relieve the pressure on the Russians in the Caucasus by forcing the Turks to withdraw troops to the new front.
2. To open the Black Sea to allied shipping by forcing the passage of the Dardanelles.
3. By striking a blow towards Constantinople to compel the Turks to abandon their attacks on Egypt.

In Southern Russia there were immense stocks of wheat of which Western Europe was in need. If the operations were successful this wheat could be shipped from Odessa, and in exchange the Russians would receive munitions for the heroic fight they were putting up against Germany and Austria between the Baltic and the Carpathians.

Those of us who served at Gallipoli had not always these great issues before us. We were content to know that we were fighting the Turk who had basely sold himself to the Central Powers, and were upholding the Cross, like Crusaders of old, in its long struggle with the Crescent.

The evening of 2nd July was fine, with a fresh easterly breeze, and though the troops on the deck of the *Racoon* were packed like sardines the passage was a pleasant one. As we neared our destination artillery were at work on Achi

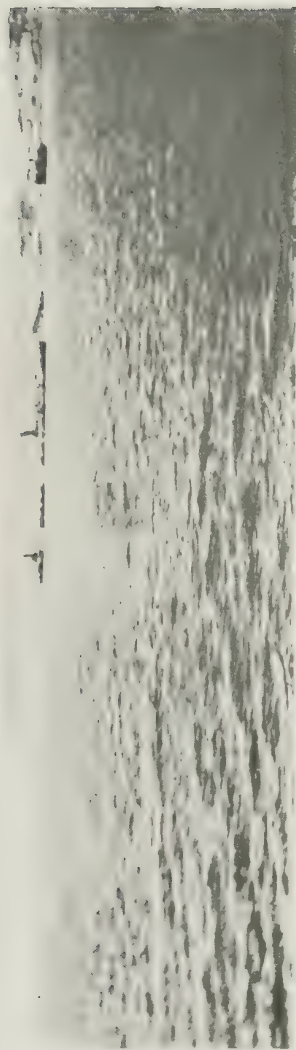
Baba, and the flashes of the explosion followed by the dull boom of the guns were—to most of us—our first glimpse of actual warfare.

Arriving off Cape Helles in semi-darkness about 8 p.m., the *Racoon* slowed down and felt her way cautiously to the landing place at Sedd-el-Bahr, better known as “V” Beach, where she brought up alongside the *River Clyde*. The pontoons connecting that historic hulk with the shore had been much damaged the previous day by the enemy’s big shells from Asia.

In disembarking we had to clamber up an accommodation ladder to the *River Clyde*, follow a devious path through her battered interior, descend a gangway from the bow, and pick our way ashore over a miscellaneous assortment of half-sunken pontoons, boats and planks—no easy task in the dark for a man laden with rifle, pick or shovel, pack, blanket, ground-sheet, and 150 rounds of ammunition.

About 9.30 p.m. as the first men were quitting the *Racoon*, a message was passed back that the O.C. troops was urgently wanted on shore. When he had triumphed over the difficulties of the obstacle course and reached the roadway at the pier-head, the C.O. found an officer of the Divisional Staff awaiting him.

The S.O. was a little excited and the instructions he gave were not so clear as one could have desired. The patch on which we were forming up was a favourite target for the enemy’s shells from Asia. They were in the habit of devoting special attention to it on nights when they thought troops were being landed. We were to proceed to No. 1 area—wherever that might be. A guide would accompany each party and an officer of the Divisional Staff would be with the first party. We must move in absolute silence ; no lights or smoking. We would be exposed to shell-fire whenever we passed the crest of the rise from the beach, where we ought to adopt an extended formation. At our



CAPE HELLES, GALLIPOLI.



destination we would find some trenches, but not sufficient to accommodate the whole Battalion, and it was up to us to lose no time in digging ourselves in.

The C.O. was hustled off with two platoons of "A" Company before these were properly landed. Where we were bound for and exactly what we were to do when we got there, none of us knew, except presumably the Staff Officer who accompanied us and perhaps the N.C.O. who acted as guide. But subsequent happenings proved that they were almost as ignorant on these points as ourselves.

Winding up a steepish rise through a region which seemed crowded with dug-outs and piles of stores, we gained the crest where we had been urged to extend. It was pitch dark, with a steadily increasing drizzle of rain and an occasional rumble of thunder. In front there were as yet no indications of shell-fire, only an intermittent crackle of distant musketry.

So far as we could judge we were moving on a fairly defined road or path, of uncertain surface, much cut up by traffic, and at many places pitted with shell craters. To estimate the distance traversed was impossible, but we must have been descending the gradual slope for over half an hour when our guides began to exhibit symptoms of indecision. The truth was soon out—they did not know where they were.

We ought before this to have struck the trenches allotted to us: possibly we had passed them in the dark. It transpired that neither Staff Officer nor N.C.O. had even been near the spot except in daylight, but both still professed confidence in their ability to locate the trenches. It was explained to us that these lay between the Pink Farm Road on which we had been moving, and the Krithia Road, which was some distance to our right. So we turned off the road towards the right and commenced our search.



After wandering in the rain for half an hour, we came upon what appeared to be a wide ditch sheltered by some straggling trees. Our guides decided that this must be a section of the elusive trenches, and at their suggestion Major Downie and his half-company were bestowed in it temporarily while the rest of us continued our quest for the remaining trenches.

Our progress was frequently interrupted by flares sent up from the trenches somewhere in front. To our inexperienced eyes it seemed that the lights were very near us, for they showed up vividly the whole ground over which we were moving, every little clump of scrub standing out sharp and distinct as in the glare of a powerful searchlight. From repeated study of *Notes on Trench Warfare in France*, we had become permeated with the theory that where one's presence is revealed by a flare, safety from rifle or machine gun fire is only to be attained by lying down and remaining perfectly motionless. So to the first few flares we made profound obeisances, grovelling on the wet ground or behind the nearest patch of scrub as long as the stars illuminated the landscape. But familiarity breeds contempt, and as we gradually realised that the flares were much further to our front than we had thought, the necessity for this uncomfortable performance became less and less obvious until we discarded it altogether.

After ages of fruitless wandering we stumbled against a landmark which our guides recognised as within a hundred yards of the long sought trenches—a large tree marking the sight of an Artillery Ammunition Dump known, inappropriately enough, as Trafalgar Square. Here were one or two dug-outs in which the party in charge of the Dump slumbered peacefully. After we had circled the tree several times without result, the gunner N.C.O. in charge of the station was roused and questioned. Yes, he knew where the trenches were—quite close at hand.



With great good nature he rolled out of his blankets, and clambered out of his subterranean shelter to find them for us. The prospect brightened considerably, but only to become darker than ever when after a quarter of an hour's further walking he, too, proved at fault. Then suddenly it occurred to him that he had turned to the left on leaving his dug-out instead of to the right, and had been leading us away from our goal.

Wearily we retraced our steps, and then finally we found the trenches. The manner of the discovery was simplicity itself. As a matter of fact the C.O. fell into one of them, getting rather wet and clayey in the process.

In the meantime the second half of "A" Company had arrived on the scene, but we now found ourselves faced by another problem—the locating of the trench (or ditch) in which we had left Major Downie with his half-company. This threatened to prove as hard a task as that which we had just accomplished, and the C.O. remarked he would keep an eye on the trench he had found lest it should attempt to disappear again, and a party was sent off to find Major Downie.

And, after all, Major Downie found himself for us. His arrival was almost dramatic. He, too, fell into the trench. He had heard the search party calling for him and had come out to meet them. Missing them in the dark he had chanced upon the trench from the front and tripped over the parapet. With his assistance it did not take long to retrieve the missing half-company.

Instalments of "B" Company began to arrive. Casting about to the front, rear and flanks of our original discovery, traces of other less finished trenches were found, and parties were set to work to complete and extend them with the object of having some apology for cover ready for the whole Battalion, before daylight could reveal our presence to the enemy.

As the night wore on additional parties joined up from the beach.

The *Whitby Abbey* had now arrived and was disembarking the left half-Battalion. The first party of "C" Company reached the trenches about 5 a.m. The enemy must have spotted us soon after daylight, for they saluted us with a few rounds of shrapnel at irregular intervals. These did little damage, but served to stimulate the flagging energies of the digging parties, encouraging them to special effort to get the trenches completed.

It was 8.30 a.m. before Major Jowitt appeared with the last party landed. By this time sufficient trenches of sorts to accommodate the Battalion had been completed.

While getting "D" Company into our most advanced trench, Capt. Findlay was slightly wounded by shrapnel. He was sent back to Mudros on the *Whitby Abbey* which had brought him across a few hours before. His first visit to Gallipoli had not been a prolonged one.

Throughout the day the enemy sprayed our trenches with occasional bursts of shrapnel. By this time we had discovered that they were officially described as "rest" trenches, and were some considerable distance behind the firing-line. So we "rested" as best we could, each man effecting such improvements to his own personal bit of cover as could be carried out unostentatiously behind the shelter of the parapet.

That afternoon Colonel Morrison and Major Jowitt, with other senior officers of the Brigade, were shown round some of the forward communication and support trenches, and had the general situation explained to them.

The night was devoted by all ranks to the improvement of our trenches and to sleep when we were satisfied with our handiwork. More rain fell, and we got very wet and smeared with that remarkably tenacious mud which only Gallipoli can produce.

The following day (4th June) parties of officers were sent forward to be shown the Eski Lines, others going up to spend an instructive night in the firing line in the Centre Sector held by the 42nd Division.

We could not but be surprised at the smallness of this cockpit in which three nations battled. From the cliff at Cape Helles to the top of the impregnable Achi Baba was only  $5\frac{1}{2}$  miles. The distance straight across the Peninsula at the firing line was not more than  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles. On our flanks we were shut in by cliffs along the Aegean Sea on the left, and along the Dardanelles on our right. Every acre of ground we held was dominated by the hill in front, about 720 feet high. Our right flank and the vitally important landing places, "V" Beach and "W" Beach (Lancashire Landing), were under observation from Asia, less than three miles away at its nearest point. Somewhere across there on the Plains of Troy the Turks had at least one big gun to harass us, "Asiatic Ann" we called her, probably a gun dismantled from the *Goeben*. Their 6 in. guns on Achi Baba could reach any part of the Peninsula they choose.

The ground we stood on sloped gently up to the hill, pleasant arable land with here the remains of a farm and the trampled crops around it, there an olive grove and fig-trees or battered vineyard. Elsewhere was scrub and, in those early months, sweet-smelling and aromatic plants and flowers round which bees hummed and butterflies hovered in the heat.

The Peninsula was rent by three great ravines; the Gully with its precipitous banks on our left, and the Krithia and Achi Baba nullahs in the centre. In the dry season only a gentle flow of water trickled down these courses, leaving enough room for a path or even a road-way to be beaten out by which men and rations and stores could be got forward unobserved by the Turk. Their banks were honeycombed with crude dug-outs (mere scrapings in the

ground with a waterproof sheet or blanket for covering) in which men sought protection from shell-fire and relief from the pitiless sun.

Monday, 5th July, was a Turkish Holy Day. Under the personal direction of Enver Pasha, or rather Enver Bey as he then was, the enemy marked the occasion by making a most determined attack. The brunt of it fell upon the 29th Division.

We who were in support were awakened before daybreak by continuous artillery and rifle fire which ominously increased in volume. At 4.30 a.m. the Battalion was ordered to hold itself in readiness to proceed in support of the 29th Division. Breakfasts were hurried on and an extra 50 rounds of ammunition was issued to each man.

Our position came under the enemy's shell-fire, and we were heartened by the very spirited reply put up by our artillery, particularly "L" Battery R.H.A., of Mons and Le Cateau fame, firing from our immediate left front.

Walking wounded from the firing-line began to pass through our trenches. From these we learned that the attack was being well held, and that the Turkish infantry coming on with fanatical shouts of "Allah, Allah!" was being mowed down by rifle and machine-gun fire.

The enemy realised his defeat, and about 9 a.m. the firing died away.

During the morning two of our men were wounded, one by a spent bullet, the other by shrapnel. Later on in the day the Battalion was ordered forward for an instructional spell in the front trenches.

Guides from the 29th Division arrived before dusk and at night-fall we set off, moving in column of route as far as Fig Tree Farm. From thence we passed in file up the Eastern Mule Track and through a labyrinth of trenches to a ruined cottage near Twelve Tree Copse. This was the Headquarters of the 87th Brigade, and here the Battalion



was split up, "A" Company going to the trenches of the 1st Battalion Dublin Fusiliers, "B" to the 2nd Royal Fusiliers, and "C" to the 1st Munsters.

Battalion Headquarters and "D" Company were stowed away in the reserve trenches. All these battalions had suffered very severely since the historic landing on April 25th. The Munsters, for instance, had not more than a hundred of their original men left.

About this time the Turks were evidently apprehensive of an attack, and made the night hideous by prolonged bursts of rapid musketry fire. Our introduction to the front trenches was therefore a fairly lively one.

Here we first encountered some of the gruesome spectacles incidental to this style of warfare. Such sights as the withered hand of a Turk sticking out from the parapet of a communication trench, or the boots of a hastily buried soldier projecting from his shallow grave, produce on one's first experience of them an emotion of inexpressible horror. It was still more trying to look on the unburied dead lying in groups in front of the parapet; and further away, near the Turkish lines, the bodies of so many of the Scottish Rifles who had been swept down by concealed machine-guns only a week before in their gallant attempt to advance without artillery support.

It is well that this acuteness of feeling soon becomes blunted. One quickly learns to regard such things as an inevitable aspect of one's everyday environment. Thank God for this; life in the trenches would otherwise be unbearable.

Major Fisher, commanding the 2nd Royal Fusiliers, was good enough to let us have a perusal of his *Trench Standing Orders*. Afterwards he allowed Capt. Simson to make a copy of these, which we always referred to as "Napoleon's Maxims." As a record of practical experience in trench routine they proved invaluable to us later on; when we had

to hold trenches of our own we used them as the basis of our organisation of duties.

During this instructional tour "D" Company sweltered in its reserve trench under a blazing sun, vainly seeking shade and refuge from the flies.

Evening brought the report of the Battalion's first "killed in action"—Pte. Wallace of "A" Company, who had been shot through the head while on look-out in the firing-trench.

If possible the heat became more scorching. We all suffered an unquenchable thirst upon which gallons of tea when available made little or no impression.

The drinking water was unpalatable, being heavily chlorinated to sterilise it. Our modest ration of unsweetened lime-juice sufficed to remove the unpleasant flavour from one fill of a water-bottle, but would not stand further dilution. In any case water-bottles could not be refilled at will, and it was a long walk to Gully Ravine from which we drew our water. It may be recorded here that this "trench thirst," as we dubbed it, remained with us for our first few weeks on the Peninsula. Thereafter it gradually disappeared until our craving for liquid became normal.

Meanwhile we were rapidly learning to adapt ourselves to circumstances; to sleep soundly on the fire-step of a trench; to extemporise fuel and cooking appliances; to endure the myriads of flies which swarmed over our food, pursuing it even into our mouths, bathed (and drowned) themselves in our drink, and clustered on our faces, waiting in queues to sip moisture from our eyes or lips; to live with relish on bully-beef, Maconochie, tea, hard biscuits and jam; in short, we were becoming able to fend for ourselves.

After dark on July 8th the Battalion moved back to our rest trenches near Pink Farm and had an excellent night's sleep.





GULLY RAVINE, CAPE HELLES.



The following day we received orders to relieve the 7th H.L.I. in the firing-line to the right of the Achi Baba nullah.

The move took place in the afternoon, and although we left in very open formation—single file with distances of three yards between individual men and thirty between platoons—the Turk spotted us and turned on his artillery. Seven men of “D” Company were wounded, and more casualties were incurred further on when we reached the communication trenches.

It is easy to write that between 4 and 7 p.m. we took over the firing and support lines, but the relief itself was a difficult matter—those reliefs always were, for trenches are narrow things through which a fully-equipped and weary man passes with difficulty. Troops must not leave a trench until the reliefs have arrived and taken over the duties. This is absolutely necessary, but it means that until the relief is completed the trenches are usually crowded out and one's passage along them is a painful struggle.

The nomenclature of trenches is always interesting. Those we were now in borrowed their names from battalion commanders in the Royal Naval Division—Parsons Road, Trotman Road, and Mercer and Backhouse Roads. Through this system of trenches ran two communication trenches—Oxford Street and Central Street, in which latter Battalion Headquarters were situated.

Our first night passed uneventfully, but the following day we gathered that something was brewing. Orders were received to clear the western portion of our firing line and support trench to permit of a bombardment by the French artillery. (The French held the right sector at Gallipoli.) Fire opened at 3.45 p.m. and for about two hours the “Seventy-fives” kept at it, doing considerable visible damage to the enemy's wire and trenches. The enemy replied with counter-battery work, and also shelled our communication trenches what time Colonel Morrison and

Captain Simson, our Adjutant, had the unpleasant duty of reconnoitring the area in which the bulk of the enemy's fire was falling. They were searching for trenches in which the Battalion would be held in reserve for the attack which was now in preparation.

During the night Lieut. W. Beckett reported some activity in No-man's Land in front of "A" Company and invited the bombers to try their hand. Now the bombers had received their first introduction to their precarious weapons only 24 hours previously, when they took over from the 7th H.L.I. a Garland mortar, a trench catapult and various crude jam-tin and canister bombs of sinister aspect. Selecting the catapult, which Lieut. Leith thought would be less dangerous to his team than the mortar, they aimed as best they could in the dark, applied a canister bomb to the pouch, lit the fuse and pressed the trigger. The shot was a lucky one exceeding their highest expectations. It burst among a party of Turks crouching in the open. Amid shrieks of "Allah!" survivors could be distinguished making for cover. Immediately the Turkish line opened up rapid fire, which was continued for about half an hour before things settled down to normal again.

Our first week on the Peninsula was over. Casualties for this period were: officers, one wounded; other ranks, three killed and twenty-six wounded, of whom three subsequently died of their wounds.

## CHAPTER III

GALLIPOLI (*contd.*)—OPERATIONS 12TH-18TH JULY, 1915.

IN the afternoon of July 11th the firing and support lines were cleared for another bombardment, and later we were relieved by the 7th H.L.I., who took over our right sector, and the 5th Argylls who took over our left. Enemy artillery gave us unpleasant attention, causing some casualties before we had installed ourselves in reserve trenches immediately behind.

In accordance with orders for the battle which was to be fought the next day, "A" Company was moved into Plymouth Avenue in support of the 6th H.L.I. on the extreme left.

There were to be two attacks against strong Turkish positions which had already defied capture ; the first in the morning by the 155th (South Scottish) Brigade, from the right of the sector of trenches held by the Lowland Division ; the second in the afternoon by our own Brigade. French troops were to push forward simultaneously with the first attack. The 156th Brigade—Royal Scots and Scottish Rifles, who had been so badly cut up in the attack of 28th June—was to be Divisional Reserve.

Both attacks were to be preceded by a bombardment, and in each case three lines of trenches were to be captured and the furthest line held.

Fortunately the eve of the battle was quiet, and the exhausting ration, water and ammunition fatigues, which



only those can appreciate who have taken part in such preparations, were pushed through in the dark without serious interruption from the enemy. At length it dawned and the sun rose in a cloudless sky.

It is well-nigh impossible for one who has played but a small part in a big engagement to give a coherent description of the whole. He can tell only of such happenings as came under his own observation. Of the broader issues and general trend of the action, as well as of the minor local incidents away from his own little corner of the field, he can but repeat what he has learned from others, reconciling as best he can the conflicting versions of the same episode as it is narrated by those who have seen it from different points of view or taken part in it.

The preliminary bombardment of the enemy's lines commenced punctually at 4.30 a.m. The Turkish guns replied almost at once, and the volume of fire on both sides rapidly increased until the din and vibration became almost unendurable. From our Headquarters at the junction of Oxford Street and the Old French Road little could be seen of what was going on. Our artillery was mainly concentrated on the trenches away on the right which were to be assaulted by the 155th Brigade, only a few guns being directed at the position on our immediate front; its turn was to come later.

At 7.30 our artillery fire ceased with startling suddenness. The hour for the attack had arrived, and the guns were now to be switched on to the Turkish artillery and reserves to prevent these giving any effective assistance to the troops defending the trenches. A minute or two later distant cheering and the sharp rattle of musketry were heard mingling with the roar of the Turkish guns. The 155th had gone in.

An hour or two elapsed before any news of their fortunes reached us; an hour or two during which the guns thundered



almost as vigorously as ever and the rifle-fire came and went in bursts. Then things began to quieten down and tidings sped along the lines that the attack had succeeded: the French had gained some ground on their extreme right, and the 155th had secured their objective.

Soon, however, this good news was robbed of some of its gladness by a rumour that at least one of the K.O.S.B. battalions had been badly cut up—that they had gone too far and had been unable to return; what had become of them no one seemed to know. It was several days before we heard what had actually happened. The 4th K.O.S.B. had been ordered to take three lines of trenches which were shown on the maps issued for the attack. Two lines were rushed without much difficulty; but there was no third line to take!—at least not where the third line appeared on the maps. The map had been prepared from photographs taken from aeroplanes, and in these photographs there appeared as a trench what proved to be, in reality, only a shallow ditch or sunken pathway. Photography, we are told, cannot lie; evidently it may at times mislead.

When the attacking battalion reached this ditch they did not recognise it as their furthest objective and went right on, seeking the non-existent third trench, until they came into the area which the French artillery were shelling to prevent the forward movement of the Turkish reserves. It was long hours before they were able to fall back on the captured trenches, and then only after terrible losses.

Towards 2.30 p.m. a message reached us that the attack by our Brigade might be delivered earlier than the appointed time and that we were to be prepared to move. Orders had previously been received that companies were not to go into action with more than four officers and that each was to leave twenty-five men with Battalion Headquarters.

The artillery preparation for the afternoon attack was a repetition of the morning bombardment, but as fire was now

almost entirely concentrated on the trenches in front of our Brigade, we were able to form a better conception of its effects. The destruction was enormous. Parapets and trenches were scattered in clouds of dust which soon became so dense as to blot out the entire landscape from our sight. The impression was that of a huge black cloud resting on the ground, a cloud incessantly rent and illumined by the red flashes of the bursting shells. Nothing, it seemed, could live under such smashing fire. In actual fact, as we saw for ourselves after the position had been taken, the enemy's casualties from it were appalling. The morale of the survivors must have been terribly shaken. The marvel is that, after such an experience, they were able to put up so stout a resistance as they did at many points.

The attack of the 157th Brigade was launched about 5 p.m. Over the parapet of Oxford Street we watched the 6th H.L.I. advancing in successive lines on our left flank. Nothing could have been finer than the steadiness with which line after line pushed on through the enemy's bursting shrapnel, until each in turn was hidden from view in the inferno of smoke and dust which screened the trenches.

Meanwhile the 5th A. & S.H. and the 7th H.L.I. were pressing forward on our front and right respectively, but of their movements practically nothing could be observed by us. "C" Company moved up into Trotman Road as soon as the attack had passed clear of it and—as we learned by a message from Major Downie received two hours later—half of "A" Company had been advanced into Nelson Avenue in close support of the 6th H.L.I.

At 6.20 a message arrived from the Brigade that the 7th H.L.I. had secured their objective and that we were to send fifty men with picks and shovels to assist in consolidating their front line. These we supplied from "D" Company in reserve, with instructions to get the tools from "B" and "C" Companies as they passed through.

After 7 a further order was received to send at once a fatigue party of twenty-five, with tools, to Brigade Headquarters at Port Arthur. Lieut. J. F. C. Clark was despatched on this duty with the twenty-five men left behind by "C" Company. A few minutes later another message arrived, with instructions for "C" Company to move forward and support the 7th H.L.I., whose firing line required reinforcement. This was passed to Captain Neilson. On taking his company forward he found the front trench already so crowded that only a few of his men could be got into it, and he withdrew the remainder again to the support trenches, leaving Captain Brand with one platoon to assist the 7th.

Shortly after 7.30 an officer of the 6th H.L.I. brought a message from the Brigade Major (Major E. Armstrong, H.L.I.) asking us to send a party to take over a number of prisoners from the 7th H.L.I.

Sec.-Lieut. R. E. May was despatched on this duty with the twenty-five men left at Headquarters by "B" Company. We never saw him again. With the two or three leading men he got separated from the remainder of his party in the confusion which prevailed after nightfall in the maze of trenches in front. In his search for them he came upon a small trench held by a mixed party of units of the 155th Brigade. A strong counter-attack was developed against this trench. With the few men he had he took an active part in driving back the enemy but was killed as the attack was finally repelled, and buried where he fell.

Until far into the night every available officer and man left at Battalion Headquarters was kept hard at it bringing ammunition, stores and rations from the Brigade dump at Backhouse Post up to the firing line. The work was exhausting but the men, recognising its vital importance, laboured willingly. When finally we did get settled down for a few hours sleep, it was with the pleasing consciousness



that in this, our first big engagement, if the fates had afforded us no opportunity of gaining special distinction, we had at least put in much useful work and contributed indirectly to the success of our comrades' efforts. But in the meantime, although it was not until the following day that any news of it reached us, "A" Company had had an innings and had played the game in a way that must ever be recalled in the Battalion with pride.

It will be remembered that this company had been sent to support the 6th H.L.I. That battalion's task was to seize the Turkish trenches on the west bank of the Achi Baba nullah—trenches officially designated F11, F12 and F12A. Our capture of these would protect the left flank of the E trenches—the objective of the remainder of the attack—which would otherwise be left very open to counter-attack from the west of the nullah. Branching off from F12A, and running back in a long curve into the enemy's next line of defence, was a trench known as F13. It was necessary, if F12A was to be held by us, that the southmost stretch of F13 should be cleared of the enemy.

F11, the portion of F12 running eastwards from F12A down to the nullah, and F12A itself were captured in rapid succession by the 6th H.L.I. For about 100 yards to the east of F12A, F12 had been so knocked about by our artillery that it was no longer a trench—merely an irregular series of shell craters—and it was completely evacuated by the enemy.

But when they had secured F12A the 6th found their impetus exhausted. It is no discredit to them that this was so, for of the three Battalions launched to the attack they had the worst ground to traverse and the heaviest fire to face.

"A" Company during the earlier stage of the attack had been pushed forward, in close support, to a small work known as the Lunette near the head of Nelson and Plymouth Avenues.

About six o'clock, finding that his own battalion had as much as it could do in holding and consolidating F12A, Major Anderson, who was temporarily in command of the 6th, ordered "A" Company to move forward and take F13. On receiving this order Major Downie led Nos. 3 and 4 platoons over the parapet, the right half-company under Captain Morton following them at a short interval. Their route led along the lower end of F12A, which had been almost pounded out of existence by our high explosives. There were several casualties while traversing this zone, including Major Downie himself who received a severe bullet wound in the head.

Reaching F13 the company drove the enemy a considerable distance up the trench until checked at a point 70 or 80 yards beyond its junction with F12A. Here the Turks, possibly reinforced, made a determined stand behind a traverse or interior work of some kind and a comparative deadlock ensued, both sides maintaining a heavy fire at a distance of less than 30 yards, but neither being able to gain any ground.

At this stage, through some misunderstanding, two machine guns arrived from another unit in response to a verbal message passed back through the crowded trenches asking for "a machine gun in a hurry."

The enemy had all along been using grenades freely, and very soon after the arrival of the machine guns a vigorous counter-attack was pushed against our narrow front under cover of a perfect hail of bombs. Sec.-Lieut. J. W. Malcolm, who was with our most advanced party and had been handling his men coolly and steadying them by a splendid example of courage and endurance, was killed.

Simultaneously with his fall one of the machine guns was disabled and put out of action. The men, deprived of their leader, gave back about 20 yards, leaving the machine gun behind, while the Turks pushed on still under cover of a



storm of bombs, to which our men could not reply as they had not been issued with grenades.

For a time the situation was critical. It looked as if "A" Company were to be driven back and the trench lost. But they soon steadied down to hold on. The Turkish grenade had a fuse which burns for 8 to 10 seconds ; it therefore rarely explodes until some seconds after it has fallen. Recognising this, some of our bolder spirits began to pick up and throw back the enemy's grenades. Pte. J. Melrose and Corporal A. R. Kelly were amongst the first to attempt this and their example was quickly followed by others. It was a deadly dangerous game, for it was impossible to tell how long any fuse had still to burn and the grenade might explode at any moment, but though several men were killed and wounded in this way, the survivors persisted bravely and the Turkish advance was effectually checked. Their bombing slackened off gradually and it became possible to hold on until the R.E. came up and erected a barricade across the trench.

While this was transpiring word of the loss of the machine-guns had gone back. Captain Morton heard of the incident and decided to make an effort to recover them. Having collected a small party of six or eight volunteers, he climbed out of the trench and worked his way along the open ground beside it, making a slight detour apparently with the intention of rushing the guns from the flank. Dusk was now turning to darkness and those who were in the trench were unable to see what actually happened. The little party evidently came under heavy fire before they were in a position to make the rush. One or two got back unhurt ; one (Private Cleugh) mortally wounded, staggered into the trench just in front of the barricade which was being erected, and was brought in only to die ; of Captain Morton and the others nothing more was seen. One can only hope that their deaths came quickly and that they were mercifully

spared the lingering torture of waiting wounded for succour which could not be rendered. It was a splendid plucky effort, which might well have succeeded, and, though it did not succeed, it at least failed gloriously.

Lieuts. W. Beckett and L. G. Aitken with the sadly diminished company held on grimly, and Corpl. C. M'Intosh, who was blinded by a bomb which exploded in his hand, Corpl. R. Holman, Lance-Corpl. W. Miller, Pte. G. B. Langland, who was severely wounded, and Pte. (afterwards Sergt.) A. Paterson specially distinguished themselves. At 1.30 next morning the Company was relieved by the Plymouth R.M.L.I. Before dawn an alarm summoned them to the front again, but nothing untoward happened.

On the morning of 13th July a curious incident happened among certain troops in the firing line. The trouble began, as it so often does, with an indiscreet verbal message. One of the front trenches was over-crowded and the officer in charge wished to relieve the congestion by sending back a section. Without thinking of possible consequences he passed along a message for No. — Section to retire, and, as this order was not complied with as rapidly as he expected, followed it up with a more peremptory message that the section was to retire at once. Scarcely ever does the simplest verbal message passed along a line of men reach its intended recipient in the form in which it was despatched. The result is sometimes puzzling, sometimes amusing; on this occasion it was nearly tragic, as part of the firing line was left untenanted.

Captain John MacDonald, who had "B" Company in Parsons Road as Permanent Garrison, as soon as he became aware of what was happening telephoned back for instructions. His message was somehow delayed, and receiving no reply to it he took the responsibility of acting on his own initiative. Though the Permanent Garrison was detailed in orders to remain in Parsons Road, he pushed forward at

once with his company and occupied the abandoned trenches before the enemy had time to make any move to secure them. This saved the situation.

Early in the forenoon vague and conflicting rumours began to come in about "A" Company and the losses it had sustained. As we were anxious to get definite particulars of what really had happened and as to where the company now was and how it was faring, Major Jowitt set out to find it and obtain the desired information. He had not been long gone when a message arrived from Lieut. Beckett giving particulars of the losses. The hours slipped past without any word from Major Jowitt and we began to fear that some mischance had befallen him. At last, towards three o'clock, word came from the 7th H.L.I. that he was lying wounded in a trench known as E12A a short distance in front of the Horse Shoe. On further enquiry we learned that his wounds did not appear to be serious, but that it would not be possible to get him out of the trench until after dark as all approaches to it were being heavily sniped. Colonel Galbraith, who had found him wounded, had made him as comfortable as was possible in the circumstances, and one of our own men, having heard where he was, had gone up to the trench to remain with him until he could be removed. As soon as it was dark enough to cross the intervening ground, Captains Simson and Neilson with our medical officer, Captain Kennedy, and a stretcher party went up and brought him down to a dressing station, where his wounds were attended to and he was sent down to an hospital ship. The report was that his wounds were not serious, although he was naturally in considerable pain after lying so long in the sun and after his trying passage down from the front through narrow and winding trenches.

At a conference of C.O.'s held at Brigade Headquarters at 3.40, we were informed that a battalion of the Royal Naval Division was arriving to deliver an attack on the



right of the 155th Brigade with the object of securing some gaps in the line between that Brigade and the French. This was preceded, at 4.30, by the usual bombardment. There would appear to have been some ghastly blundering in connection with the arrangements for this attack. We heard afterwards that the battalion was quite ignorant of the ground ; that it only arrived a few minutes before the attack was timed to commence ; and that it had difficulty in finding the trench from which it was to move on its objective. There must have been similar uncertainty about the objective itself, for the troops advanced across the open, suffering severely from shell-fire, into a trench already held by the 155th Brigade, a trench which—had they known it was so held—they might have walked into by a communication sap with little if any loss. Afterwards they pushed on some distance beyond this trench but found no other to take, and when they fell back on the existing front line the position remained exactly as it had been before the attack, except for the terrible casualties they had so unnecessarily sustained. In his published despatch, Sir Ian Hamilton, referring to this attack, explains its necessity by stating that “ about 7.30 a.m. the right of the 157th Brigade gave way before a party of bombers, and our grip upon the enemy began to weaken.” He must have been entirely misinformed as to the position, unless the “ giving way ” to which he refers was the mistaken retirement from the trench which Captain John MacDonald had occupied, as previously narrated. If this is so, the officer who issued the orders to the Naval Battalion cannot have been informed that the “ giving way ” was only temporary and that the 157th Brigade had almost immediately reoccupied its trenches and was actually holding them when this unfortunate attack was launched.

About four o'clock we received the bad news that Captain John MacDonald had been killed—shot through the head

by a sniper's bullet—in the front trench which his company was still assisting to hold. This brought the total of our officers' casualties in the two days' fighting to seven ; three killed (Captain MacDonald and Lieutenants Malcolm and May) one missing (Captain Morton), and three wounded (Majors Jowitt and Downie and Lieutenant J. G. Milne).

For two days after the battle all units were kept busy gathering up the arms, equipment and loose ammunition with which the terrain was littered, as well as maintaining the defence of the captured positions.

On the afternoon of July 15th, " C " and " D " Companies took over the trenches on the west of the Achi Baba nullah from the Plymouth Battalion, while " A " Company relieved part of the Drake Battalion and the 6th H.L.I. on the east of the nullah. This relief had to be carried out after nightfall, as the position was as yet unsafe from Turkish marksmen who sniped the approaches by day. The sector included the famous Horse Shoe Trench which was then a death trap, although, after much labour had been expended upon it, it was latterly known as the safest position on the Peninsula.

That first night was an eerie one for " A " Company, and for our Signalling Officer, Captain R. H. Morrison, who had to link up Battalion Headquarters in Wigan Road with the isolated company. Selecting a quiet interval about 11 p.m. he slipped out from F12 with a couple of his Headquarters signallers to run the line across. Working over almost unknown ground, with only a general idea of the direction and position of the enemy, their worst anxiety was lest in the dark they should lead their wire into a Turkish trench instead of the Horse Shoe. A few bullets were sweeping down the nullah as they crossed, but fortunately none of the little party was hit. Breasting the slope on the further side they eventually landed safely in the Horse Shoe, much to the surprise of the sentries there. It did not take long to



instal the instrument, and, leaving one of the signallers in charge of the new station, the party retraced its steps and got back to Headquarters shortly before midnight to report communication established.

On the 16th we took over from the Manchesters a small stretch of trenches on our left, and "C" Company salvaged fifteen asphyxiating bombs from a pent-house in one of the nullah trenches. A captured Turkish officer, evidently disapproving of these innovations by his German masters, had given information as to where they would be found. Packed in two cases marked RAKATEN, they were long, slender, uncanny-looking projectiles evidently intended for discharge from a trench-mortar.

For the next two days and nights we laboured almost unceasingly, dog-tired and hardly able to keep awake, improving our defences.

The R.E. wired our front across the nullah, and we ourselves extended F12A and F12 down to the bed of the stream as a first step towards joining up with the Horse Shoe.

Over forty Turks were buried at this time between F11 and F12. F11 itself was so densely packed with corpses that it had to be filled in.

After dark on the 17th, "B" Company, now commanded by Lieut. N. R. Campbell, relieved "A" in the Horse Shoe. "A" had several casualties during its tour of duty there, some men having been hit in the trench itself, others while going back for water.

On the west side of the nullah Pte. A. Heron was killed, and the bombers holding the barricade which had been thrown up on the 12th had casualties also. Our snipers gave a good account of themselves, one having seven observed hits to his credit and another five on the same day. There was a well about 400 yards off, round which occasional parties of Turks could be easily observed until they realised

that the recent advance had exposed the place to our view.

On July 18th, "A," "C," and "D" Companies were relieved by the 6th East Lancs, and painfully dragged their weary way back to rest. The journey of less than three miles took us fully four hours, for we were all pretty well played out after nine such days and nights as we had just come through, and the scorching heat necessitated many a halt by the way. How we revelled in that drink as we paused at Romano's Well!—the only spot on the Peninsula where we could get a draught of real, cold, unchlorinated water!

About 6 p.m. we reached our destination, a series of holes in the ground lying between the Pink Farm Road and "X" Beach, and about a mile behind the Farm itself. The Quarter-Master, Lieut. T. Clark, and his satellites had a good meal of hot stew and potatoes ready for us, and lots of tea, after which we stretched our blankets on the ground, lay down and fell asleep.

It was not till 5.30 next morning that "B" Company rolled up, absolutely "cooked." They had not been relieved until 2.30 a.m., the Lancashires not having considered it safe to move up their company until a communication trench, on which we had been working for some days, had been completed.

## CHAPTER IV

### GALLIPOLI (*contd.*).

THE Battalion remained in "Rest Camp" for twenty-one days.

The words "Rest Camp" conjure up a mental picture of shady trees and green, close-cropped meadows sloping to a winding river, of ordered rows of tents or huts, of a place where the horrors of the trenches can be forgotten and war-jangled nerves re-attuned in a placid atmosphere of peace and innocent recreation—not to mention baths and long cool drinks. Nothing could be more unlike this ideal than the reality of a Rest Camp on the Peninsula. We used often to exercise our imaginations in seeking the reason for christening these delectable abiding places Rest Camps. Was it in a fine spirit of official irony, or on the *lucus a non lucendo* principle, or was it in respectful but rather slavish imitation of the organisation of the Expeditionary Force in France? They had Bomb Schools, Training Camps, Rest Camps and all sorts of luxuries. We on Gallipoli must therefore have the same. So we instituted Bomb Schools on the Peninsula and a Training Camp at Mudros to which our weak battalions had regularly to send parties of officers and men who could ill be spared from duty in the trenches. We must therefore also have Rest Camps in name if not in actuality. They were not camps, and were not conspicuously restful, but we knew them officially as Rest Camps. At the time of which we are writing they were sometimes

referred to as Rest Trenches. This was, if anything, less appropriate. In no military sense could they be regarded as trenches.

Having explained what a Rest Camp was not, let us now attempt to convey some idea of what it was by describing the fairly typical example in which we found ourselves planted. Imagine then, a bare expanse of clayey soil from which all signs of vegetation—if there ever was any—have been obliterated. The surface is trodden fairly hard and is powdered with a thin layer of heavy dust, which the slightest shower of rain converts into mud tenacious as tar. The “Camp” is bounded on the North (*i.e.* the extremity nearest the enemy) by the remains of a ragged hedge, in the thickest clumps of which an intrepid explorer may discover a few dusty, juiceless, brambles. The previous tenants have been superficial in their methods of tidying up their lines, for the hedge also shelters a miscellaneous assortment of discarded clothing, empty meat and jam-tins and all the odd items of rubbish which, in a well disciplined unit, disappear in the incinerator. South of the hedge the ground falls with a very gradual slope for perhaps 200 yards, to the dry bed of a ditch or streamlet just beyond which a row of trees serves to conceal partially the dug-outs in which our Divisional Staff have their permanent quarters. Beyond this again the surface is almost level for a space, then it rises again with increasing gradient, past the lines of the 1st Lowland Field Ambulance, to the ridge half a mile away, behind which it drops precipitously to the sea.

In one of his earlier despatches, Sir Ian Hamilton very aptly likens the configuration of the Peninsula between Achi Baba and Cape Helles to the bowl of a huge spoon, with Achi Baba at the heel of the bowl and the Cape at its toe. This Rest Camp of ours was near the toe and rather to the left of the centre line ; in full view of Achi Baba itself, but screened to some extent from its lower slopes by an



insignificant intermediate crest-line about 200 yards to our front.

The so-called "trenches" as we found them, bore more resemblance to hastily constructed strings of golf bunkers than to anything else on earth. They did not appear to have been laid out on any definite plan. Speaking generally they ran in long irregular lines from East to West, the narrow strips of pathway between being broken here and there by detached experimental efforts. The excavations were of all shapes and sizes. They varied in depth from two to about six feet according to the caprice of the designers and the energy of the most recent occupants. One could not walk five yards in the dark without stepping or falling into some sort of hole and drawing lurid language from an abruptly wakened sleeper. The parapets were ragged, irregular, and rarely bullet-proof. There were no suggestion of revetting; probably there was not more than twenty sandbags in the area allotted to the Battalion. Sandbags were scarce enough in all conscience in the fighting trenches, and it was not surprising that none could be spared for the troops in the back lines; any which might be available being required for such semi-permanent works as Divisional and Brigade Headquarters and the trenches occupied by the R.E. and other Divisional troops. Nor was there any form of overhead cover. In some places the dangerous expedient of under-cutting the sides had been resorted to to secure a little shelter. Fortunately the undersoil was stiff, the sides of the trenches could be cut quite perpendicular and in fine weather there was slight risk of the under-cutting causing subsidences. Shade from the sun's beat could only be obtained by stretching ground sheets or blankets overhead. These also served to keep off the night dews.

The C.O.'s dug-out was the only one which boasted anything approaching a roof. It was burrowed into the bank under the hedge which has been already referred to. The



floor space was about 8 feet by 4, entrance being obtained by going down two or three roughly cut steps. For about two thirds of its length—the furthest in two-thirds—it was roofed with branches and some old torn sacking, covered by 6 or 8 inches of loose earth. This roof was level with the bank of the hedge and gave about four feet of head-room. Living in—or rather below—the hedge, the C.O. soon discovered he had to share his quarters with a populous and flourishing colony of flies, which actively resented his intrusion at any time during the day, though by night they exhibited an admirable spirit of resigned toleration. Flies were inevitable, but when strange winged beasts and enormous centipedes developed the habit of dropping in casually at inconvenient hours, one felt that one's hospitable instincts were being over-taxed.

It was on the second or third day of our stay that the Divisional General, while making an informal inspection of the Camp, found the C.O.—or we should rather say, ran him to earth—in his den, and after sitting on the doorstep chatting for a few minutes, dropped a remark as he departed to the effect that he thought a C.O. should do himself better in the matter of a dug-out. The seeds of dissatisfaction thus soon ripened quickly, and came to full fruition when a snake about three feet long was discovered in the corner where his pillow usually rested. No doubt he was a harmless, well-meaning chap. Probably his visit was prompted by the most friendly motives; but when he was urged to clear out he lifted up his head and became vituperative. After that there was nothing for it but to cut him into convenient lengths with a shovel, upon which he was afterwards removed for interment. Shrinking from a possible interview with his widow the C.O. sought another resting-place, and a fairly roomy dug-out was excavated for him in the open ground a few yards north of the hedge. But when he removed to it a

large party of the flies insisted on accompanying him and installing themselves in his new quarters.

At first the officers messed in the open in picnicky fashion. While this was pleasant enough there was always an element of uncertainty about it, for one could never foretell when a meal might be postponed or rudely interrupted by an outburst of "straffing" from Achi Baba or Asia. So Captain Simson applied himself to the construction of a dining saloon, at the digging of which the defaulters sweated for several days. The result was imposing, a large rectangular excavation not unlike an empty swimming bath, with a massive table of solid clay, and benches of the same simple design and material round the walls. Though, of course, roofless, it afforded a measure of safety from shells, but one shudders to think what would have been the effect had a high explosive landed on the table while a meal was in progress.

Captain Findlay had made a rapid recovery from his wound and was awaiting us when we arrived at Rest Camp. A fortnight later—on 31st July—we received a welcome reinforcement by the return to the Battalion of Captain V. P. B. Stewart and twenty-six other ranks from the Lowland Division Cyclist Company.

The climate, the flies, and the experiences of the preceding fortnight had already begun to tell upon the general health of the Battalion. Diarrhoea and dysentery were prevalent throughout all the troops on the Peninsula, and we suffered with the rest. One factor which contributed to, if indeed it was not—as many of us believed—the primary cause of, the prevalence of these diseases, was the unsuitability of bully-beef and hard biscuits as the basis of our diet under the weather and other conditions in which we were then living. This was quickly recognised by the medical authorities and important modifications were soon introduced in the scale of rations. The toothsome Maconochie, rather

rich for the average digestion under a tropical sun, disappeared in the meantime from the menu. Fresh meat—or, to speak more strictly, frozen meat—of excellent quality was substituted for bully, which latter was only issued on the rare occasions when, owing to transport difficulties, no frozen was available. The hard biscuits gave place to good bread; the ration of desiccated vegetables was increased; an issue of rice was instituted; cheese was reduced and preserved milk increased. The only rations which were never quite sufficient to satisfy the men were those of tea and sugar—especially sugar. They liked their tea very strong and *very* sweet, and quickly tired of rice unless boiled with lots of sugar, which the limited rations of sugar did get run to. Jam was plentiful and popular; marmalade only appealed to a limited circle. Some uncharitably minded fighting men were wont to insinuate that the best beloved brands of jam, such as strawberry and raspberry, never got beyond the Beach, the A.S.C. who handled the supplies being suspected of a nefarious weakness for these varieties. One hesitates to listen to such calumnious suggestions, but it must be admitted that for many long weeks we received an overwhelming proportion of “Apricot Jam” with which, popular as it originally was, the men became so “fed up” that they changed its name to “Parapet Jam,” because, they explained, it was so invariably thrown over the parapet instead of being eaten.

In his desire to keep the troops fit, our Divisional Commander issued instructions that the hottest and most trying hours of the afternoon were to be set aside as a period of rest similar to that which, he explained, is officially enforced in the Italian army under the name of “Riposo.” Between two and four o’clock no work was to be done: fatigues unless vitally urgent were to be suspended: all ranks were to remain lying down quietly in their quarters: there was to be no moving about: noise of any kind—even



conversation—was forbidden: nothing was to be allowed to interfere with our afternoon naps. “Redosso,” as the men promptly dubbed it, bade fair to become an extremely popular institution. But the General had reckoned without the flies. They had not been consulted and their Union leaders were bitterly opposed to any form of compulsory repose. The hours which we were supposed to devote to refreshing sleep were those during which they were usually most active, and in vehement assertion of the rights of Fly Labour they worked harder than ever, with the result that our “Riposo” proved a period the very reverse of restful.

The effect of these reforms, medical and military, was to check to some extent the ravages of the diseases which most afflicted us; but to eradicate them entirely, even to prevent their spreading, was beyond human power. From the middle of July until we left Gallipoli for good, our effective strength was being continually reduced by dysentery, pyrexia, and jaundice. There were of course other forms of sickness and disease, but the number of cases was negligible. The wastage from the three mentioned was not uniform, but it was constant. The number sent to hospital during each month would range between 5 and 10 per cent. of our strength, as that strength decreased from month to month. These, it must be remembered, only represented the worst cases, a very small proportion of which returned to duty, although fatal cases were fortunately rare. A much larger percentage of those affected were able to remain with the Battalion and carry on their duties, though with temporarily impaired energy and efficiency. The older N.C.O.’s and men, and the very young ones, suffered most severely. The officers had no better fortunes than their comrades in the ranks, and we lost several during this stay in Rest Camp.

Lieuts. A. B. Currie and R. M. Miller had been sent to hospital while we were still up in the trenches. Three more were sent off on 20th July—Captain A. Dingwall

Kennedy (our medical officer), Captain J. D. Black and Lieut. L. MacLellan. Scarcely one of those who remained was not affected to some extent. Captain Kennedy's duties were taken over by Lieut. Downes of the 1st Lowland Field Ambulance.

General P. W. Hendry, our Brigade Commander, had been in indifferent health since our arrival at Mudros on 1st July, but had struggled gamely to carry on his duties. By the end of the month, however, it had become obvious that his illness was gaining a firmer grip on him and the doctors ordered him off the Peninsula. He went most reluctantly, and we were sorry to part with him. We were exceptionally fortunate in the officer appointed to succeed him, General H. G. Casson, who had been in command of the 2nd South Wales Borderers (the old 24th) since the original landing on 25th April, and whose practical experience of fighting in Gallipoli was the best possible qualification for the command of the Brigade in the work which lay before it.

During all this time the various Beaches and Rest Camps were regularly shelled by the enemy's heavy guns on the reverse slopes of Achi Baba and—with even deadlier effect—from the Asiatic coast. The beaches and the roads leading to them over the ridge received most of this unpleasant attention. We used to watch the big shells bursting over the cliffs and wonder how life could be possible on the beaches below. Many tales reached us of casualties in the administrative and non-combatant services whose work lay there, and many of the marvellous escapes of individuals. For instance, at Gully Beach on one occasion a surgeon was blown to pieces, while the patient upon whom he was operating escaped untouched. The roads were exposed over their whole length but certain special points were usually selected as targets, and several high explosives would land at short intervals on one of these. The resulting casualties were extraordinarily few, but it was hair-raising to see—as



we often did—a mounted man, or a gharry with its pair of mules and Indian driver, suddenly blotted out in the dust and smoke of a huge burst, to reappear, when the cloud cleared, moving on its way as unconcernedly as if nothing had happened. But the next rider or driver to pass this particular spot generally made a slight detour.

The Rest Camps were also favoured with a few shells at all sorts of odd times. Some units lost quite a number of men in this way. In this respect we were more fortunate than most of our neighbours, for although we had several men hit while out on fatigue we had in the whole three weeks—if we are not mistaken—only one man wounded actually in Rest Camp. This comparative immunity we attributed to our lines being partly screened from the view of the enemy's observing stations by the low lying crest to the north. Still we had several thrilling half-hours when shrapnel spraying over our lines compelled us to lie low. Only once in these weeks were we treated to a dose of high explosives. This happened about seven one morning when most of the officers were at breakfast in the swimming-bath mess room. Six big "coal-boxes" were hurled on us in rapid succession. One exploded near our mule lines just beyond the Quartermaster's dump, doing no damage to speak of; a second landed and burst right inside a trench occupied by several of the Headquarters signallers. We thought they were all wiped out, but, miraculously, not a man was hurt. They were even laughing—somewhat nervously, it must be admitted—as they scrambled out of the ruined trench. Another shell exploded about 30 yards short of our mess, leaving a symmetrical saucer-shaped crater about 6 feet in diameter and a little over 2 feet deep in the centre. Its dust showered over us and covered our unfinished meal with a thick layer. It had been an unusually attractive breakfast too! The other three shells were "duds."

Training of any kind was impossible. There was no ground unswept by fire on which to train. Two or three men might move across the open with impunity, but the appearance at any point of even a small party, say a group standing or sitting in the pathways between the rest trenches, often drew fire. Still the men got plenty of exercise, though it was of a kind not exactly popular with the average infantryman. Day after day, the Battalion was called upon to supply from 400 to 600 men for fatigues. Sometimes these were day fatigues under the R.E. ; more frequently for the A.S.C. or Ordnance at one or other of the beaches, unloading and stacking stores and ammunition ; but most of our work was by night, when large parties were employed under the R.E. in the construction of main communication trenches to enable troops to be moved up to the various sectors of the firing line without using the exposed roads or crossing the open. Though the men never pretended to like this work it was carried out cheerily enough.

Facilities for personal cleanliness were rare on the Peninsula, but when in rest camp the men were encouraged to bathe, a portion of " X " Beach, which was within half a mile of our lines, being allotted for this purpose. Full advantage was taken of this. The cliff overlooking the beach was honeycombed with untidy dug-outs ; the beach itself rough and dirty, the water still dirtier, clay-coloured and coated with a thick scum of straw, grain, and other light debris from the barges that were unloading—all that could honestly be said in its favour was that it was wet. After a time the officers discovered that it was worth the forty-minutes walk to bathe at a cleaner and more attractive beach, Morto Bay, on the other side of the Peninsula. This lay within the French sphere. To reach it we had to pass through some of our allies Rest Lines, and it was interesting to have a peep at them and at their ways of doing things. The beach at Morto Bay was clean and sandy ; the water

clear, though very shallow for a long distance out. It was an ideal spot for a lazy floating bathe. But it had one drawback. The enemy's Asiatic batteries and their aircraft were rather addicted to landing shells and dropping bombs in its placid waters—shells and bombs intended, no doubt, for the camps near the shore, but none the less distracting to the bathers whose ablutions they disturbed. Two of the officers returned one evening with a thrilling tale of a huge bomb which had landed in the sea within fifty yards of them.

Our Church Parades, which were only possible when in rest camp, were peculiarly impressive. To assemble the men during daylight was out of the question; the services were therefore held under cover of darkness. Although attendance was voluntary there was almost invariably a good turn-out. None of us is likely ever to forget these little gatherings; the solemn quiet which the distant crackle of rifles seemed but to emphasise; the Psalms and Hymns, in which all joined devoutly but in tones muted and softened in harmony with the evening stillness; the short lesson, read by the light of a screened candle or electric torch; the simple prayers for our comrades facing death, for the sick, the wounded, and the dying, for the bereaved, and for the dear ones waiting for us at home; the brief, practical address; and—to finish—the National Anthem, which one sang with dimmed eyes and a lump in the throat—it seemed to mean so much. No service in the finest man-built place of worship, with pealing organ and highly-trained choir, with sermon earnest and inspired, could have such power to move and impress, to convey such certainty of the near presence of the Almighty and the Eternal, as did these humble, informal meetings under the stars, the congregation dimly visible as it clustered on the parapets of the nearest trenches or squatted on the ground at the Padre's feet.

While we were taking our leisure (!) in rear of the firing-line, things in front of us were comparatively quiet. There



must have been times of anxiety for the higher commands, but we knew nothing of these or of what might be impending, except that everyone must have realised that our available force on the Peninsula was none too strong for the task which it would have to face if the enemy should make a determined effort to pierce our lines. At the end of the first week the Battalion was again placed at the disposal of the 29th Division, then holding the extreme left of the British line. The chief use they made of us was to call for large fatigues to construct terraced dug-outs for them in the sea-cliff, but for several successive nights we had to sleep in our boots with equipment and ammunition beside us, ready for an immediate move. We had also to link up all our lines of rest trenches with communication trenches to render movement possible under shell fire and to excavate at high pressure a communication leading up the west side of the Pink Farm Road into one of the main cross-cuts. We cannot recall the official designation of this trench; we always spoke of it as Armstrong Alley, in compliment to our Brigade Major who had driven us to the task of constructing it.

It happened one quiet forenoon that a batman was cleaning his officer's revolver. In rest camps revolvers are not supposed to be loaded, but this one was, and the batman was so unversed in the ways of revolvers that he failed to recognise the fact. A revolver in the hands of a novice is almost as dangerous as an automatic pistol. In fact it spells considerable danger to all in the vicinity. It was therefore scarcely surprising that the batman let off a round in his efforts to remove the cylinder. As ill luck would have it the Divisional General chanced at that moment to be passing through our lines preceded by an orderly. The bullet whizzed close past the General and brought down the orderly with a wound in the leg. The thing was, of course, a pure accident; but the possible consequences of careless-

ness in handling loaded fire-arms are so serious that the man who accidentally lets off a round is invariably punished for his negligence, even when no serious harm has resulted. In this particular instance the offender would have appeared in ordinary course at the regimental orderly room the following morning, when the circumstances would have been enquired into and the claims of justice satisfied. But the General, who was naturally annoyed—to put it mildly—departed from the normal procedure and, taking the matter into his own hands, sent for the culprit and interviewed him on the spot, whether for purposes of admonition or of punishment we know not. After an impassioned harangue in which, with many winged words, he fully expounded the enormity of the offence, he concluded dramatically somewhat in this fashion: “I hope you are satisfied with your morning’s work! You see what you have done. You have wounded this poor fellow, and you very nearly hit me! Are you satisfied?” It was an awkward question to answer with due tact. Rattled as he was by the dressing down he had just received the man could hardly be blamed if his reply was ambiguous. At least it might have been more neatly expressed. It was “No, sir.”

On 29th July a letter written by Lieut. J. G. Milne from hospital at Alexandria brought us the bad news that Major Jowitt had died of septic poisoning on the hospital ship *Rewa* on 17th July, while on the passage to Alexandria, and that Major Downie, who had been on the same ship, had succumbed to his wounds in hospital on the 20th—the day after being landed. The loss of two officers so deservedly popular was sincerely mourned throughout the battalion. Major Jowitt’s death was wholly unexpected. His wounds had not been considered serious and the possibility of complications had not suggested itself to any of us. From the first we had known that Major Downie’s case was a critical one, but our latest word of him before the hospital ship left



Helles had been that "he was getting on better than could be expected," and all had been hoping for further news of good progress.

Before we left rest camp all ranks underwent two inoculations against cholera.

Early in August we learned that the Brigade would shortly take over the extreme left sector at Fusilier Bluff. After a reconnaissance of the position by Colonel Morrison and the Adjutant, a party of eight officers and sixteen N.C.O.'s went forward on August 6th to spend a night in the new firing line. On the way up, as they were passing along the westmost sector of the Eski line, one of our most promising young N.C.O.'s—Corpl. W. Wood, "D" Company—was killed by a stray bullet.

This was an historic day on the Peninsula. Fifteen miles up the Aegean coast the first landing was being made at Suvla Bay. To divert the enemy's attention and to supplement the advance there and at Anzac, the 29th and 42nd Divisions attacked on our front that afternoon.

In spite of very terrible losses these two divisions gained some ground. The Turks, however, threw in reinforcements from their reserves concentrated at Maidos, a force with which they had boastfully threatened to drive us into the sea. The bulk of this army stemmed the advance at Suvla, but enough could also be spared for the fight at Cape Helles to annul our success. Indeed by August 7th only the forward portion of the Vineyard, between the Krithia and Achi Baba nullahs, remained in the hands of the 42nd Division as the nett gain of the previous day's battle.

Our party of officers and N.C.O.'s spent the night at the Border Barricade sector. Up there on the left they had the pleasure of coming across our pre-war chaplain, the Rev. J. A. Cameron Reid, who was at that time attached to the 1st K.O.S.B. They got back to rest camp the following afternoon, having been compelled to lie low for a considerable

time in the Gully, which had been heavily shelled by the enemy since sunrise.

The same day our move to the left sector was cancelled, and instead we were sent up at 8 p.m. to relieve the Chatham and Deal Battalion in the Eski line and to be in general reserve to the 42nd Division in the centre sector. On the trek forward two men of "A" Company (Captain D. E. Brand now in command) were wounded near Clapham Junction in the Krithia nullah.

By 11 o'clock "A" and "B" Companies were installed in the Eski line to the east of the nullah, with Battalion Headquarters on the inner flank, while "C" and "D" (now under Captain T. A. Fyfe and Captain R. H. Morrison respectively), with the Machine-Gun Section, occupied the line west of the small nullah. The trench between the two nullahs was in ruins owing to shell-fire directed against a battery behind it.

Indeed the whole position, though more than 1000 yards from the firing line, was a particularly unhealthy one with so much desultory fire going on in front. All the stray bullets seemed to drop in the vicinity and it was obvious that the Turk, taking advantage of the observation which his higher position yielded him, had in addition rifles or machine-guns trained on it. Occasional bullets, for instance, kept plugging into the ground beside Headquarters' dug-out. One of these imbedded itself in a box which was being carried in by an orderly. After that anybody passing in or out moved, as the Colonel described it, with a well assumed air of having something to do in a hurry.

During our seven days here, the Battalion sent forward double parties of about three officers and 100 men each for night work in No-man's Land. They were extending No. 7 sap through the Vineyard, and digging across it a new trench, which was afterwards known to fame as Argyle Street.

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It was at this time that the Colonel initiated a morning conference with company commanders, which met at Headquarters at 9 a.m. daily. It afforded an opportunity for an exchange of views upon the various questions affecting us and saved much correspondence, rendering the issue of formal Battalion Orders unnecessary except for special operations.

Preparatory to our taking over the trenches in front, Major Findlay, Captain Morrison, and Lieut. Leith spent the night of 11th/12th August in the Vineyard sector. About 7 p.m. on the 12th, however, the Turks started a determined attack on the Vineyard, and succeeded in recovering from the hardy Lancashire territorials most of the ground they had so gallantly captured on the 6th. During this action the Battalion "stood to," and "A" and "B" Companies moved forward to the Redoubt line for eventualities. They returned the following morning, and in the course of the same day the Battalion took over the firing line to the right—that is from the small nullah to the Horse Shoe. On the left our front line (Argyle Street) was still far from safe and required further digging and sandbagging, while on the right the chief work in progress was a tunnel which was being driven from the Achi Baba nullah up to the Horse Shoe.

Before we moved up we had received three officers from the 2/5th H.L.I., Captain P. MacLellan Thomson and Sec.-Lieuts. A. Barbé and Colvil. The former we lost at once to the 5th Argylls, who were short of Captains.

Captain A. Pirie Watson, R.A.M.C., took over the duties of medical officer from Lieut. Downes, who returned to his own unit, and for a time we lost the services of Major Neilson. He had been left behind ill in rest camp. Getting worse he was invalided home, but returned to us in record time.

On the night of 13th August, Sergt. D. Macdonald ("A" Company) who had served in the Battalion for thirteen or fourteen years, after previous service in the line battalions

of the H.L.I., was killed in F12A while shifting a sandbag on the parapet.

It was hard work getting our trenches into order and collecting the ammunition which was lying about in all sorts of odd corners ; here a few unopened boxes, there a pile of loose rounds. The French on our right handed over to us 90,000 rounds of British ammunition, loose and in boxes, which they had retrieved in their sector. Besides ammunition, we made a big collection of miscellaneous equipment. Verey lights, bombs, etc., all of which were stacked centrally ready to be sent down to Ordnance when opportunity might offer. Good progress was also made with the reconstruction of Argyle Street.

During the night of 15th August Lieut. Leith and Sergt. G. Downie crept out from our line near the small nullah and got close up to F12 at a point where a blasted tree with a shell-hole through its trunk stood out a few yards in front of the enemy's trench. They heard men conversing inside, and a shot or two was fired over the parapet. Grenades were also thrown from a work of some kind near the tree. These must have been on the off-chance of catching some of our people in the open, for Lieut. Leith was confident that he and his companion were not spotted. Nothing was observed to indicate the presence of machine-guns in F12, but the ground in front of the trench was searched occasionally by enfilade fire from F13. The conclusion at which Lieut. Leith arrived was that the trench itself was but thinly held and that for its defence the enemy relied chiefly on fire from F13. After remaining in observation for a considerable time the scouts crept carefully back, and the results of their work were passed to the Brigade at 5 a.m. with our morning progress report.

Later in the day we were asked to report to the Brigade in writing on the enemy's trenches in front of our sector, as to the feasibility of seizing F12. Our opinion was that there



would be little difficulty in rushing F12 without incurring serious casualties, but that to consolidate and hold it under frontal and enfilade fire from F13 (in which the enemy appeared to have machine-guns) and possibly also enfilade fire from F12A, would be very costly. We suggested that before any attempt on F12 should be made, at least the southern portion of F13 ought to be rendered untenable.

All forenoon rumours were floating about that arrangements were being made for an attempt to retake the Vineyard by troops on our left. Confirmation of these rumours came in the afternoon from the Brigade Major when he telephoned to inform us that the attack was to be delivered during the coming night, and asked us to send along, to assist, a catapult which was in use in our F13 bomb station, and the R.M.L.I. team, which had been left with us to work it. This was done, though the special authority of the Naval Division had to be obtained before the corporal of the R.M.L.I. party could be prevailed upon to move his catapult and team from the spot where it had been posted by his own C.O. In view of the possibility that the enemy might be tempted, when he found the Vineyard attacked, to retaliate upon Argyle Street, fifty of "D" Company slept in F12, ready to move immediately to the assistance of the garrison of the new trench.

About 11 p.m. the Brigade gave us information as to the hour and other particulars of the attack, and instructions that we were to assist the attack by a heavy fire demonstration at 2.31 a.m. against the trenches on our front, and that if the C.O. considered the conditions justified it, we were to push forward and secure F12. The Brigadier agreed with our views put forward in our report, and impressed upon the C.O. that he did not expect him to attempt this unless an unexpected favourable opportunity presented itself, but that in any case patrols might find out more about F12. Patrols were accordingly warned to be in readiness and, in

the orders issued as to the fire demonstration, the firing line and support companies were warned that they might be required to advance.

Punctually at 2.31 a.m. on 16th August, we opened fire along our whole front. The intensity and volume of the enemy's reply were startling. Within a minute rifles and machine-guns were showering a hail of lead on our parapets. It almost looked as if they had been expecting an attack to develop from our sector. At any rate they had been very much on the alert and their trenches were strongly held. This strength they disclosed to an extent which at once proved the futility of any attempt on our part to rush F12. It was not a case of a sudden burst of fire dying away rapidly. The General had instructed the C.O. to report to him by telephone at 2.50. At that hour there was not the slightest diminution apparent in the spray of bullets which was lashing our front. At least one machine-gun was pelting, at very close range, the barricade blocking the northern end of the stretch of F12 held by us—the very barricade behind which one of our patrols was waiting to slip out into the open. Others were ripping up our sandbags here and there along the line. No patrol could possibly venture out into such a storm. This was reported to the General, who asked the C.O. to ring him up again when things became quieter.

Within about twenty minutes the machine-guns dropped out. The enemy had apparently come to the conclusion that any attack we might have been meditating had been nipped in the bud. Their rifle fire also slackened perceptibly, although it continued until daybreak much heavier than their usual night firing. On comparing notes, we found that two, if not three, machine-guns, had disclosed themselves in the dilapidated length of F12 between our barricade and the "shell-holed" tree—a portion of the trench which we had hitherto regarded as entirely abandoned—and that there

were more of them in the same trench between the tree and the small nullah ; the exact positions could not however be located. Several had also been spotted in F13 and from the direction of F12A. The trap had been baited for us, and it was well that we had not walked into it.

At 3 a.m. the C.O. again reported to the General, who was much interested to hear of the nest of machine-guns we had discovered. He asked for a written report and sketch showing approximately their positions. He also informed me that the attack on the Vineyard had not been successful. Lieut. Leith took the sketch in hand at once and we were able to send it off, with the detailed report desired, before seven o'clock.

In Argyle Street about 10 a.m. Lieut. E. T. Townsend was wounded in the shoulder by a sniper's bullet.

The same day Colonel Morrison handed over the sector to the 7th H.L.I. and installed the battalion in reserve trenches immediately behind Wigan Road, Redoubt line and the First Australian line. Here we supplied various digging and salvage fatigues for four days. These were arranged in easy reliefs so that we were able to wipe off arrears of sleep.

This was a difficult sector for the Quartermaster and his men. Setting out from rest camp each evening with the rations—and mails when there were any—loaded on mules, they ran the gauntlet across the open to a point where they entered the Mule trench, which ran up the side of the Achi Baba nullah.

This trench was not wide enough for pack-animals to pass in it. The traffic had therefore to be run to a timetable, one battalion's mules having to make the journey up to the advanced dump and away again before the mules of another battalion entered. Casualties on the way or delay caused by a recalcitrant mule were a constant night-mare, but Lieut. T. Clark always delivered the goods. From the



advanced dump the rations were man-handled by companies to their own cook-houses.

Our water supply was carried in camel tanks, empty rum jars or petrol tins from Romano's Well. Later on water from even this source had to be chlorinated and the well lost its charm.

From now, about the end of August, till the end of October, life was somewhat monotonous, consisting of spells in the firing-line and moves to rest trenches, for short periods. While in the line we had little to do in the way of defending our trenches, as it was pretty obvious the Turk did not intend to attack. This did not, however, save us from providing large numbers of fatigue parties. The ground which we occupied soon became a network of trenches and we were always endeavouring to push forward our front line by means of T-headed saps which were ultimately linked up. The object in this was to get as near to the enemy's front line as to allow our mining operations.

We found the Turk easily got the "wind up," more especially at night, and for very little reason he would start a burst of rapid fire, which sometimes would be kept up for a very considerable period. The staff frequently arranged various ruses to try and draw him in this way. For instance, in the end of August, on receiving news of Italy's declaration of war on Turkey, orders were sent to the front line that at a certain hour during the night, all troops would cheer, to give the Turk the impression that we were going to attack. Of course this immediately started an outburst from the Turkish lines; rifles, machine-guns and a proportion of the Turkish artillery all joined in. To say the least of it, it was uncomfortable in the trenches, but few casualties occurred there. Most of the damage, which in reality was very small, took place well behind our lines, as the Turk on these occasions always fired high, and we came to the conclusion that they must stand on the floor of the trench, with



their rifles pointing upwards over the parapet, firing as hard as they could. It certainly had the advantage of disclosing Turkish machine-gun positions, and we were able, with the help of the artillery, if not to destroy the machine-gun, at least make it move to another part of the trench.

Again, on receiving news of a big advance in France, we carried out a similar plan to annoy the Turk. This time our artillery joined in, each battery firing a salute of twenty-one guns on selected objectives. This again very successfully drew the Turk, and probably he was never quite certain of our intentions, and may have formed the opinion that our infantry was unwilling to attack, an opinion which we formed of him later on with justification.

The ships which were lying off Cape Helles occasionally carried out minor bombardments. It was very interesting to watch the effect of their shells bursting when they got a direct hit on the Turkish lines, as of course we had no land guns of such heavy calibre. The ships were perfectly safe from any reply the Turkish artillery cared to make and we in the front line had to suffer for the navy's demonstration. No one really objected to this, although there was a lot of "grousing," because we were glad to feel that we had the support of these big guns, which must have harassed the enemy tremendously.

The people that annoyed us most of all, however, were the trench mortar companies, who lived in comparative comfort in substantial dug-outs behind the front line. A detachment of these people would frequently visit our trenches, take up a position and proceed to bombard the enemy's line and bomb saps with doubtful success. It was enough, however, to annoy the Turk, and very soon spotting the position of the trench mortar, he would concentrate several guns on it, and at the first sign of any enemy reply our trench mortar friends would pack up and make a hurried





departure, realising that they were due at another part of the line to carry out a similar demonstration.

The sickness which had started earlier on was continuing to take heavy toll of all the troops on the Peninsula and the battalion was gradually dwindling in strength. Of the full strength battalion which had landed at the beginning of July, there were only left sixteen officers and 498 other ranks at the end of September. While these numbers further decreased later on, Corps Headquarters realised the danger of this drain on the troops, especially as it seemed impossible to obtain reinforcements from home, and started a rest camp at Imbros with the idea of giving a rest to officers and men who most required it. This camp was gradually moved to Mudros, and in all, three parties were sent, and the lucky ones benefited considerably from the change. Several officers joined us during this period; some of them unfortunately were not with us long owing to this sickness. Early in November we got our only fresh draft from home, Lieut. Andrews and forty-two men from the 2/5th H.L.I. joining us. Major Neilson also rejoined the battalion at this time.

A few days after this the Battalion moved from the line for another short spell in rest camp to an area which was new to the Battalion, but had been vacated by the 155th Brigade before our arrival, they relieving us in the line. The officer's mess accommodation was somewhat limited and it was found necessary to form two battalion messes, Headquarters and half the officers occupying a fairly comfortable dug-out with matting roof for a shade. The other mess was constructed by Captain Fyfe, who worried the Adjutant for working parties until he had dug a large enough hole in the ground as he considered would be necessary. The next problem was to get some sort of shelter, as the weather was beginning to break and we were endeavouring to prepare for rain. A large canvas sheet was produced in the usual skilful manner of Captain Fyfe for obtaining what



he wanted, and then arose the question of how this roof was to be supported. Nothing daunted, he approached the Colonel and managed to borrow some precious pieces of timber which had been used by the C.O. in his headquarters during the last spell in the line. This wood had been got with some difficulty from the engineers and was very precious. Once he had it in his possession, however, he seemed to forget the use it was really intended for, and finding that the beams were much too long to support the canvas roof, instead of considering some means of raising the roof or lowering the beams into the ground, promptly sawed them in half and was perfectly satisfied with the result, which was really excellent as far as the other members of the mess were concerned. Very shortly after the mess had been finished, however, the C.O. came round to pay a visit, and was horrified, to say the least of it, to see the destruction that had been carried out on the borrowed beams. Captain Fyfe, however, had a ready answer and the trouble was smoothed over.

For some time past we had had signs that the hot weather was not going to continue and we had frequent showers of rain. One afternoon clouds began to gather from the south, and just as it was beginning to get dark we realised we were in for a pretty severe thunderstorm. With thunder we knew to expect rain and made hurried preparations, but no preparations we possibly could have made would have saved us from the deluge that came that evening. It rained steadily, in a way that few of us had ever experienced before, for several hours, and dug-outs soon filled up with water. It was impossible to go to bed, and a weary miserable night was passed by everyone praying for the rain to go off. An unfortunate feature was that the Quartermaster the day before received from Ordnance the Battalion's winter clothing, and had issued it that morning. It had been issued by companies to the men in the afternoon and by

night it was sodden with rain. It was impossible to keep anything dry, and all we could hope for was some sunshine to follow after the storm. In the early morning the rain went off and when day broke there were some very funny sights. Few will forget the figure of Dow fishing in a deep pool of water for various articles of clothing with a stick, while his empty valise floated about on the surface. Fortunately the day was bright and warm and, as it is possible in a climate like that, we got blankets and clothing dried.

To add to our other troubles an epidemic of jaundice had broken out about this time, which accounted for a great many officers and men leaving the Battalion. Aitken, if one could judge the severity of the attack by the colour of the skin, must have been very ill indeed, because he was a deep yellow colour from head to foot. He was determined not to leave the Battalion, and during his spell in the line before coming down to rest camp he had been regularly dosing himself with various pills and only eating very light food, as far as it was possible to regulate one's diet. On reaching rest camp, however, he decided to adopt a kill or cure treatment and gave up taking the doctor's drugs. The mess stores consisted largely of cases of tinned crab and a good supply of whisky, neither of which, with the greatest stretch of imagination, could be called light diet. Aitken, however, took large quantities of both and returned to the line, white and feeling very fit. It is difficult to make any medical man believe this story, but nevertheless it is true.

After this doubtful rest we received orders to return to the line and relieve the 156th Brigade, who a short time before had carried out a successful attack on a small sector of the Turkish line by blowing up their position and occupying the crater. It was this part of the line just east of Krithia nullah we had to take over. On arriving in the trenches about mid-day on the 21st November, and during the relief, we were somewhat disturbed by the enemy directing artillery

fire on the parapets and communication trenches, which, although some readers may consider strange, was quite an unusual occurrence. Little attention was paid to this, however, until about 4 p.m., when without any warning the enemy opened up a heavy bombardment on this particular part of the line which we held. This continued for about an hour and we were confident that the Turk was about to attack. Suddenly the artillery fire ceased and a red flag was seen being waved from the enemy's trenches. Shortly afterwards two Turks came over the parapet but were immediately shot down. They were followed by an officer and a handful of men, possibly a dozen, who advanced a short distance, but when about half of their number fell, the remainder turned and bolted back to their trenches. All along the enemy's line we could see bayonets appearing above the parapet and there is no doubt that he intended to attack, but, apart from the few who actually left the trenches, the attack did not develop. Our artillery during his bombardment, and more so after his artillery fire stopped, certainly directed a very heavy fire on his trenches, and we can only assume that the Turkish infantry was suffering from "cold feet" on account of this. Our casualties were practically negligible.

During the bombardment, an amusing incident took place with Buchanan's servant, Inglis, who was very deaf. This deafness increased with the climate of the Peninsula, but no one imagined that it had increased to such an extent as we found out that day. Inglis had gone to draw water at a neighbouring well before the bombardment started, and later, when the Turkish artillery fire was about at its height, was discovered strolling along the support in the most unconcerned manner with a bucket of water in his hand. Another of the servants, Kirk, who had been left at "B" Company Headquarters in one of the communication trenches, was found after the bombardment lying on the ground with a dud shell close to his feet. This shell, Kirk



explained afterwards, had arrived a few minutes before, and striking the parapet of the communication trench some distance away, had ricocheted and landed with a thud and a cloud of dust beside him. He was still in the state of being uncertain whether he was alive or not and was very glad, when spoken to, to find that he was able to reply.

A certain amount of repair had to be carried out on these trenches which had suffered from the bombardment and this kept us busy for the following days. After which we were relieved and moved back to reserve trenches. A message was received by the C.O. from the Corps Commander congratulating the Battalion on its steadiness during the "attack."

Life on the Peninsula was now becoming very uncomfortable owing to the weather conditions. We had many days of rain, and the Gallipoli soil is of a peculiar clay nature which sticks to one's boots when wet and is very difficult to remove. We had not even the luxury of roofed dug-outs in many places and had to do the best we could to shelter ourselves by means of our waterproof sheets.

The last few days of the month the weather changed again and we had several days very severe frost, which put us to our wit's end how to keep warm. Everyone wore as much clothing as they could possibly get on and some of us must have presented a very funny appearance. None will ever forget Major Findlay appearing at the C.O.'s Orderly Room with a Balaclava helmet on to keep him warm and a glengarry perched on the top of it with the intention of appearing properly dressed.

After this few days frost the weather broke again and on the evening of the 27th November we had a few hours' heavy rain which later on turned into driving snow. This was the tail-end of the blizzard which caused so much damage and loss of life at Suvla and finally decided the evacuation of that part of Gallipoli.



## CHAPTER V

### GALLIPOLI (*concluded*).

EARLY in December, after a few days in the rest camp, we returned to the Eski lines, west of Krithia nullah. The Eski line was the first trench one met on the way up to the front line and was a continuous trench running across the Peninsula. It had been dug during the early stages of the campaign, when the original forces had succeeded in getting a footing on the Peninsula and driving the enemy back from the beaches towards Achi Baba. The trench had been greatly improved since these days and was now used by troops in corps reserve.

While here we were unfortunate in losing Captain Fyfe and the Quartermaster, both wounded by stray bullets. It was a bad place for this sort of thing as the enemy's spent bullets landed in this area—proof that the Turk as a rule fired high and was not aiming at the trenches directly opposite his front line. Neither of these officers were seriously wounded; although the Quartermaster was lucky in escaping as lightly as he did.

On the 15th December the C.O. was summoned to Brigade Headquarters and informed by General Casson that the Battalion was probably to attack two small trenches held by the enemy known as G11A and G12. This attack was to be carried out on the 18th or 19th December and instructions were given to the Colonel that a reconnaissance was to be made and a report forwarded stating the best possible

manner in which the attack could be successfully carried out. G11A was a peculiar trench situated on a tongue of land between the two branches of the Krithia nullah, some few hundred yards north of a point where the nullah divided. The ground on both sides of this trench stood about forty feet high and was held by us entirely on the west side and partly on the east side. Owing to our overlooking this trench the Turks did not occupy it during daylight, but it was decided that they sent a few men forward at night to garrison this trench. Several frontal attacks had been made earlier in the year on this trench but without success. It was accordingly decided that on this occasion attacks would be made from the flanks. To enable this to be carried out the Engineers had tunnelled a way through the cliff rising from West Krithia nullah to a point which they calculated was directly opposite the western end of G11A. They did not carry the tunnel right through at this time but left an outer shell which could be knocked away when the attack was to take place. It was a great piece of engineering work and in some ways proved very useful when the attack was ultimately carried out, although in others it probably accounted for a number of the casualties which the battalion suffered. To enable the Colonel to submit his report and make the necessary preparations, officers frequently visited the line and reconnoitred the position. Major Neilson and Lieut. Leith made a reconnaissance of G11A by night, entering the trench through a man-hole near the mouth of the tunnel. They gained the necessary information and the C.O.'s report was submitted to Brigade Headquarters, who approved of the scheme and orders were issued that the attack should be carried out on Sunday the 19th December.

It is a peculiar thing that during the Gallipoli campaign, and in fact throughout most of the war, that the attacks in which the Battalion took part were carried out on a Sunday, which we were accustomed to regard as a day of rest.

Whether this was done with the object of deceiving the Turk is uncertain.

The final orders issued by Battalion Headquarters were on the following lines. The Battalion was to seize and hold the following enemy trenches.

(a) The north-west portion of G11A from West Krithia nullah inclusive to junction inclusive of G11A, with the main central communication trench leading north-east from G11A to G12c. If the remaining portion of G11A was found to be either unoccupied or very lightly occupied that portion was also to be seized and held.

(b) The portion of G12 lying between the East Krithia nullah and the junction of G12 with the enemy communication trench leading south from G12 to Grenade Station No. 2.

(c) That portion of the communication trench referred to in (b) as leading south from junction with G12 to Grenade Station No. 2.

The above trenches were to be consolidated at once and barricades for Grenade Stations erected at about points A, B, C, D, E, F and G, as shown in corresponding red letters on the sketch. In the case of E, F and G, communication was to be at once opened to our Grenade Stations at Nos. 4, 3 and 2. If the whole of G11A was secured, a barricade was to be erected about point D1 in place of D and an emergency one afterwards at D.

In addition to the Battalion the following troops were to be at the C.O.'s disposal. Two grenade teams from the 7th H.L.I. and as a reserve two companies and three grenade teams from the 7th H.L.I., two grenade teams from the 6th H.L.I. and two from the 5th A. & S.H. In order to prevent confusion the grenade teams were lettered to correspond with their allotted stations and each grenadier wore on his arm a red band marked with the letter of his station, the reserves being distinguished by prefixing the figure 2.

Special arrangements were made by Brigade signalling officers regarding signal communication, and throughout the entire attack and afterwards these arrangements worked admirably.

The attack was divided into two portions, that on G12 and the communication trench leading into it from Sap 2 being named the East Attack, that on G11A the West Attack.

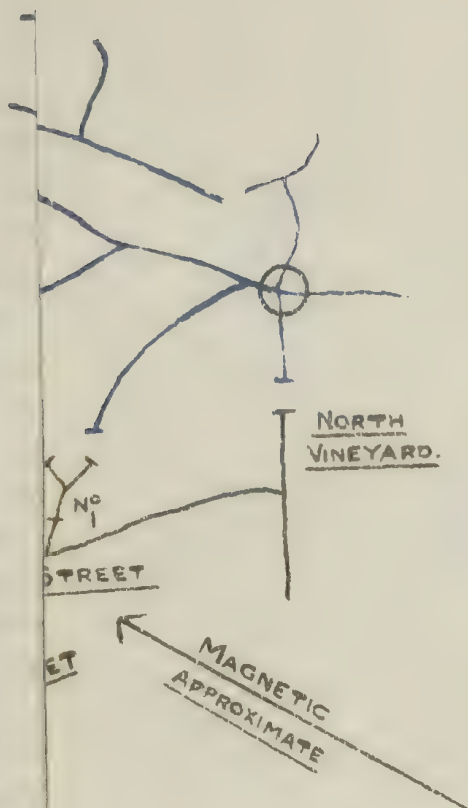
The East Attack was carried out by " B " Company under command of Major Findlay, with the assistance of two grenade teams from the 7th H.L.I. The parties were specially detailed for certain objectives and shortly before 2 o'clock the attacking parties were all in position. At 2.15 p.m. a mine was exploded at point E, and immediately the grenade teams and assaulting parties were seen doubling forward to their objectives, followed at a brief interval by the consolidating parties. Immediately the positions were reached the erection of the barricade was proceeded with. All parties reached their objectives without casualties, but very shortly afterwards the enemy opened heavy shell-fire and some rifle-fire. A number of casualties soon resulted. The consolidating parties had a very stiff job to face, as these trenches had been continually bombarded for some months, with the result that there was a large amount of broken earth to be cleared away before reaching hard undersoil. It was almost like working in sand. The work was continued with great perseverance and after some hours our labours began to show satisfactory results. About 9 o'clock the enemy launched a counter attack against F and G barricades without success, and again at about midnight a second counter attack also failed. Our casualties, excluding those of the attached grenadiers, were two officers wounded, Lieut. M'Culloch and Lieut. Dewar. Other ranks, eleven killed and thirty-six wounded.

The West Attack was commanded by Major Neilson. G11A was known usually to be unoccupied by the enemy at



least by day, but the main central communication trench running back from G11A to G12C was known to be held by the Turks at various points, and it appeared to be very much a question of time whether they or the attacking party could first reach the junction of this trench with G11A. The attack too was obviously handicapped in this race by the fact that it must be initiated from the mouth of a tunnel, entrance to which was difficult and from which it would be necessary to emerge into the nullah man by man. Time was bound to be lost in hastily assembling each party at the mouth of the tunnel and getting it started on its mission, while to rush men forward individually as they left the tunnel would inevitably result in confusion, disorganisation and possible disaster. Instructions were therefore that each party was to assemble in the nullah and move as quickly as possible on its objective as soon as it was complete.

"C" Company was employed in this attack with grenade teams from other companies of the battalion to make it up to the necessary number of parties, while each had a definite object as in the east attack. At 2.15 p.m., simultaneously with the mine which was exploded at point E, another mine was exploded in the cliff of Krithia nullah some yards north of the tunnel. A few minutes after this explosion one of the grenade parties, whose objective was the main central communication trench, had got clear of the tunnel, assembled and was moving up the slope outside the west parapet of G11A. It was closely followed by two other parties, all three being clear of the nullah five minutes after the exploding of the mine. These parties, which were moving along in front of G11A, came under heavy rifle-fire and had to drop into the trench. The overhead traverses, which were in a state of disrepair owing to the trench being unoccupied by the enemy, were low and made progress difficult and slow. Lieut. Aitken, who was leading the first grenade team, had rounded a bend in the trench with a bayonet man of his team when



RATED POSITION ON NIGHTS  
DEMBER 1915.

a, b, c, d, e.

DENOTE OBJECTS MINES INDICATED BY CIRCLES.

e, f, g. IN EAST A

a, b, c, d, IN WE

THE BARRICADES

No 6 AND No 6A.



they came under fire from a few yards range from an erection at the junction of the main communication trench with G11A. The bayonet man was killed and Lieut. Aitken wounded in the arm and leg. By this time the enemy were beginning to throw grenades from their central communication trench and getting them into G11A. Lieut. Milne, Lieut. M'Dougall and many of the men were wounded. The parties were crowded, there being about forty of all ranks in twelve yards of trench ; the assault party was entering the trench at its northern end and the tunnel was still full of the rear parties coming down. Communication with the attack commander was impossible, and Lieut. Leith, who was the only unwounded officer in the trench, decided to erect a barricade at the furthest point which had been reached. The barricade was completed by 3.30 p.m., and during its erection grenades were constantly thrown at the enemy communication trench but with little effect, as they had to be thrown uphill from the trench while the enemy's grenades frequently rolled down into it. In the meantime another grenade party under Lieut. Pitchford had entered the trench at its northern end ; they found a party of the enemy behind a barricade of bags about twenty yards up the communication trench, which runs parallel to the nullah. On throwing a few grenades the enemy began to retire. The grenadiers, however, and Lieut. Pitchford advanced up the trench with a bayonet man, but on arriving at the barricade he found none of his grenadiers had been able to follow him as they had got entangled with the head of the assault party which was pushing up G11A. As he went back to fetch his grenadiers, the Turks reoccupied their barricade and opened a brisk rifle-fire ; he then decided to erect his barricade at the junction of the trenches, and in spite of the enemy fire the work was carried out.

The assault party was now working up the trench from the tunnel. Captain Frost led the party and was mortally



wounded just as he reached the parapet. He crawled back with difficulty, and in spite of his wounds continued to direct the advance; the men were somewhat shaken by losing their leader and were inclined to hang back, but C.S.M. M'Kean, who was in the rear of the party and still in the tunnel, pushed his way forward, put the necessary stiffening into the men and led them into the trench. The consolidating party were now working down the tunnel and their progress was extremely difficult as each man was carrying a pick and a shovel as well as his rifle. Before they emerged an urgent message was passed back for a supply of bombs and the consolidating party was stopped while these were passed through. A party under Lieut. Dow, whose objective was to remove one of the barricades, followed the assault party. Lieut. Dow was killed as he entered the enemy trench. Lieut. Kirbe, in charge of another party detailed to deal with the barricade at the nullah, was also killed a few minutes after leaving the tunnel, but Sergt. Waddell, the N.C.O. of the party, doing splendid work, had the barricade completed by 4 o'clock, which rendered the passage across the nullah from the exit of the tunnel to the trench quite secure.

Another small party whose work was to establish a dump for stores and ammunition went forward under the charge of Lieut. Turner and C.Q.M.S. Stewart. Lieut. Turner was mortally wounded and C.Q.M.S. Stewart killed before the dump was established. It will be gathered that the casualties were extremely heavy, all five officers of "C" Company having been killed or wounded within a few minutes of entering the trench, and at 4 o'clock Captain Morrison was taken from his company which was in support and sent forward into G11A to take command.

The light was now beginning to fail and it was apparent that no further progress could be made to secure the junction of the central communication trench with G11A. It was

reported to Brigade Headquarters that no further progress could be made that night and all energies were applied to the consolidation of the portion of the objective actually secured. From the very beginning the work had been carried on with difficulty owing to the congestion in the trench. Steps were taken, however, to get the casualties removed and the work was carried on more rapidly. The enemy's communication trench was severely bombed by the grenade teams which had been established at the various stations and the enemy bombers became much less troublesome.

The casualties in the west attack were: killed, three officers and six other ranks; wounded, four officers and thirty-one other ranks, being in all nearly one-third of those employed in the actual attack. We were unfortunate in the fact that nearly all the officer casualties occurred within a few minutes of the commencement of the attack, and it reflects great credit on the N.C.O.'s and men the manner in which the work was carried through.

From the manner in which the enemy opened fire on the whole position which we were attacking a few minutes after the explosion of the mine, it must be inferred that he had some knowledge that the attack was to take place. His fire was specially directed at the mouth of the tunnel, and whether he had heard mining operations being carried out on the cliff or not cannot be definitely stated, but this fire was responsible for a great number of the casualties which we suffered.

The Battalion was greatly indebted on that day to the 155th Brigade, who were holding the trenches from which the parties in both attacks started. They supplied the Battalion with several hot meals, the benefit of which was fully realised, especially after our previous engagement in July, when such thorough arrangements could not be carried out.

On the morning of 20th December the Commanding Officer received messages of congratulation from the Brigade,

Divisional and Corps commanders. The Brigadier visited the trenches and informed us that the evacuation of Anzac had been successfully carried out the previous night. The object of our local attack at Krithia nullah, which was timed to take place in conjunction with other two attacks, one on the right carried out by the French, and one on the left carried out by the 42nd Division, was to hold the enemy to the Helles line should the Turks at Anzac and Suvla discover that our forces were evacuating the latter position.

With the news that the General brought us, it was apparent that the object had been successfully accomplished, and it was certainly gratifying to learn this, as the actual results of the attacks judged in yards of trenches gained did not seem to justify the number of splendid officers and men whom we had lost.

On the 21st December the Battalion was relieved from the trenches which they had recently captured and moved into support lines where we remained for a few days. The time here was not altogether comfortable, as we had several nights heavy rain and a considerable amount of shelling from the enemy's artillery.

We moved back into the line again a day before Christmas, and on Christmas day the Turk gave us a very heavy bombardment by way of greeting.

That night orders were issued that all troops on the Peninsula would cease fire at a certain hour and this was to be continued until the moon was well up. These tactics had been carried out at Anzac prior to the evacuation and it was hoped that the Turk might be induced to attack when he found us doing the same at Helles, but he was not to be drawn. It was a very peculiar sensation in the trenches that night with not a sound from our own lines and only an occasional rifle shot from the Turks. Sentries were doubled and a very sharp look-out was kept. The men were beginning to get a little bit "jumpy," when suddenly on our right



a burst of rifle-fire started ; every one seized his rifle and before you could count ten the whole line across the Peninsula had followed suit. This was only "wind up" and it died away very shortly afterwards, but it showed that all troops were at extreme tension.

The following day we moved back to the rest camp and Major Simson left us on his appointment to the 155th Brigade as Brigade-Major. Major Neilson took up duties as Adjutant.

On the 30th December a message was received from Brigade Headquarters that all surplus stores were to be returned to Ordnance and all baggage was to be sent that night to the beach. The reason given for this was the early relief of the 8th army corps by the 9th army corps, but in view of the recent evacuation of the position further north this story of relief was very much doubted and an opportunity was given to many to circulate the wildest of rumours. We were all decided, however, that we were not sorry to be spending our last few days on Gallipoli. The following day the Colonel left the Battalion to take over command of the Brigade and secret instructions were issued that the evacuation of the Helles position was to be carried out within the next week.

A few days later the Battalion moved up to the eastern section of the Eski line, a position joining the French. There was little done in the few days we spent there except in making detailed arrangements in connection with the evacuation. It was a very tedious time and as rations were none too plentiful, foraging parties used to go down to the beaches with the hope of collecting any odd dainties, such as tinned chicken or tinned fruit that might be found in the vicinity of the canteens that were being rapidly dismantled.

It might be mentioned that while one of the largest canteens was packing up stores, the working party came



across several cases of bulbs for sparklet syphons ; there had been a great demand for these during the hot weather, and the canteens had always been without a supply, now they were discovered when nobody wanted them.

At night-time shortly after it became dark the Turkish artillery which had been reinforced with some heavier guns from Anzac and Suvla subjected the beaches to pretty heavy shell fire. This caused much discussion and difference of opinion as to what his action would be on the night of the evacuation, and it was thought by most of us that we were going to have a pretty thin time of it, as we considered the Turk was too wily to be tricked a second time.

At last the day arranged for our departure came, the 8th January. Early in the morning the Battalion returned from the Eski line to the rest camp. The day was spent in destroying stores and equipment which had not been removed so that nothing of any value would fall into the enemy's hands. The orders issued with regard to movements of troops to the beaches for embarkation were, that parties of fifty should be made up including one officer. This was for purposes of checking at the various control stations the numbers embarked. The Battalion being in rest camp was included in the first embarkation, which was timed to take place about 9 p.m. Just as it was growing dusk the parties of fifty already detailed moved off and after various checks and halts reached " V " beach. Up till now everything had been perfectly quiet. As the troops moved forward on to the landing stages which led on to the *River Clyde*, the famous Asiatic gun, known as " Asiatic Annie," started firing. That morning she had had two direct hits on this landing stage and at the moment, owing to some delay on the part of the lighters which were carrying the troops off to the waiting transport, every square inch of the landing stage was occupied ; we passed a very anxious few minutes

there. It was a question of so near and yet so far, and we were greatly relieved when the gun stopped firing after sending over three or four rounds, none of which came nearer than about 25 yards away, landing in the sea with a tremendous explosion and splash. Ultimately the congestion was relieved and we moved forward into the province of the navy, who were in charge of the operations as soon as we got on board the lighters. Organisation up till this point had been perfect, but the naval officers did not seem to care about keeping units together, the one object being to get everyone off and load up the waiting transports as quickly as possible. The result was that Battalion Headquarters found themselves on *H.M.T. Osmanieh* with about eleven hundred men of the Royal Naval Division. The rest of the Battalion, which was only about 258 strong, was scattered over other ships, but very relieved to find themselves where they were with a feeling of great safety, although in reality the danger from enemy submarines was considerable. Luckily nothing of this nature occurred and about 11 p.m. the first convoy of transports sailed.

The parties which had been holding the front line trenches left their positions at about 10 p.m. and, protected by rear parties, made their way to the beaches. Embarkation throughout the entire night was carried out without any interference by the Turk and about 2 a.m. everyone was clear of the Peninsula and not a moment too soon, because the wind which had disappeared during the earlier part of the night had now sprung up and was blowing pretty fresh, which would have meant considerable difficulty in embarkation if it had to be carried out later.

It was with very mixed feelings that we left Gallipoli. When we landed in July it had been with the hope that we would be successful in driving the Turk north from the positions which he held and even some had pictured themselves taking part in a triumphal entry into Constantinople. We

had soon realised the impossibility of the situation and in reality were glad to get away from the scene of so many disappointments and hardships. Our greatest regret was the number of officers and men whom we had left behind, and it seemed wrong that we could not remain to avenge the sacrifice which they had made.

## CHAPTER VI

### MUDROS, CAIRO, SUEZ CANAL AND HILL 70 LINE.

IN the early hours of the morning of 9th January the transports, which contained the troops which had left in the first party from Gallipoli the previous night, arrived at Mudros Bay. As explained in the last chapter the Battalion was scattered throughout several ships and the process of disembarkation was by no means easy. However, the Staff got busy and lighters were soon arriving alongside the transports disembarking the troops by divisions. The lighters then moved to different parts of the shore where each division had a place of rendezvous. The sorting out then commenced and with a certain amount of confusion the battalions were ultimately assembled.

The 52nd Division was allotted a camping ground on the south side of the bay, the camp being known as Sarpi camp. After the Battalion area had been pointed out, canvas was issued and the camp pitched. The only canvas available at the time consisted of a large number of hospital marquee tents which were to accommodate the men and about a dozen bell tents for the use of officers.

The baggage which had been sent off from Gallipoli a few days before the evacuation was found on our arrival at our camp, or rather a proportion of it. It was found that a considerable amount of it had been pilfered, and we were informed that the rest of the baggage had been sent direct to Alexandria.



Life at Mudros was a great change and a great relief after our months on the Peninsula. We were able to live above ground and walk about freely in the open without any fear of drawing the enemy's artillery fire. It was difficult at first to realise that we were out of the fighting for the time being, but it did not take long to accustom ourselves to this, as after all it is the more natural life.

The weather on the whole was good, the days being bright and warm but intensely cold at night, with a certain amount of frost. The opportunity was taken to issue new clothing and in connection with this it may be mentioned how the Army Ordnance Corps unconsciously gave us a little amusement. Two of the battalions in the Brigade were kilted, and the other battalions wore trews. The Ordnance people seemed to forget this and issued to all four battalions the usual winter under-clothing which, as far as the lower garments were concerned, was not exactly suited to a kilted battalion.

While on Gallipoli the Commander of the 8th Corps, General Sir Francis Davis, had organised a Football Tournament for teams representing all units in the corps. The Battalion had been very successful in the preliminary rounds and had reached the final by the time of the evacuation. The team which they had to meet in the deciding round represented the Anson Battalion of the Royal Naval Division, and it was decided to play the tie while we were at Mudros. The day was an unfortunate one as it was blowing hard, with the result that the football was not of a very high order. The Battalion team did not succeed in beating the Anson Battalion, but it was a hard game and there is no doubt the better team won.

Those who played in the final match were, Pte. E. Hammil, "A" Company; Pte. J. B. Smith, "B" Company; Pte. A. Jardine, "D" Company; Sergt. D. Smith, "D" Company; Pte. J. M'Cann, "A" Company; Sergt. J. Logan

“ A ” Company ; Pte. J. Laird, “ C ” Company ; Pte. T. Knight, “ D ” Company ; Sergt. D. Calder, “ C ” Company ; Corpl. E. Stevenson, “ B ” Company, and Sergt. A. Bain, “ A ” Company.

In connection with this tournament an incident occurred on the 19th December, during the Battalion's attack. Captain Campbell had charge of the football arrangements. In the middle of the battle, while sitting more or less triumphantly in a captured Turkish trench, he received by special messenger word from the Division that the Battalion team must play the 5th R.S.F. the following day or be struck out of the tournament. A triumph of departmental work.

While living in camp at Mudros efforts were made to improve generally the feeding of officers and men, and as there were more canteens on the island with greater variety of goods for sale than we had been accustomed to on Gallipoli, our efforts met with a certain amount of success. One day while Major Neilson was scouring the countryside he came across several turkeys in one of the Greek canteens. One of these was immediately purchased and brought back to camp. The next problem was to find some one sufficiently skilled to dress the bird and prepare it for the pot. Lieut. Graham volunteered to carry out the work and really made an excellent job of it. The cooking was done in the lid of a camp kettle over an open fire and everyone who tasted the turkey that night at dinner voted it a great success.

About a week after our arrival at Mudros, Major Findlay left in charge of the Brigade advance party for Alexandria, and about a fortnight later Captain Buchanan, Captain Campbell and Lieut. Barbé also went on in advance. The day after Major Findlay left, orders were issued that the Battalion was to embark the following day, but as was very often the case under similar circumstances, when the camp was struck these orders were cancelled and it was not until the last day of January that the Battalion embarked on

*H.M.T. Briton*, which also carried the 7/8th Scottish Rifles and the 6th East Yorks with Colonel Morrison as O.C. troops.

Three days later the transport arrived at Alexandria, but did not dock until the following day late in the afternoon. About 8 o'clock that night disembarkation was carried out and a few hours later the Battalion had entrained and left Alexandria for Cairo.

The Brigade advance party had made all the arrangements for the camp at Cairo, which was pitched on the ground near the Egyptian Army Barracks at Abbassieh. Life there was very pleasant and the joys of a town were very much appreciated by every one after our months of exile.

We were not left long however to enjoy ourselves, and after about a fortnight at Cairo we again entrained for a station on the Suez Canal. Little did we then think it was the first move in our long trek into Palestine.

We arrived at Ballah West on the 17th February and got our first impression of what our life in the desert was to be like. The weather was very broken and not too warm, but moving about constantly in the sand was very tiring and depressing. We had had the experience of sand at Aboukir, but that was at the side of the sea where one is quite prepared for it, but at Ballah it seemed to be different. There was nothing but sand on every side except for the thin strip of water, the Suez Canal running north and south.

After about a week in camp on the west side of the Canal we received orders to move to the other bank and relieve the 31st Division, who at that time were occupying the canal defences. After some confusion which arose through the orders which had been given to us not having been issued to the 31st Division, relief was carried out and we saw the "Great Wall of China." This was a trench revetted by sand bags, running some miles to the east of and running parallel to the Canal. Its tactical uses we never could under-



stand. Days were spent trying to clean up Ballah East ; had Hercules been with us he would have diverted the Canal through the Augean camp.

On March 2nd the Battalion took over posts from Ballah to Kantara ; the work was not arduous, being mainly to see that no unauthorised persons visited the Canal to put mines therein. Everyone bathed and one officer caught a mullet on a white sea fly, but no more ; he always felt sure if he were to fish at the right time he would get a good basket, but his dreams were never realised.

Several officers who had been wounded or sick now rejoined us, including Captains Brand and Beckett and Lieut. MacLellan, also a draft of officers from the 3rd and 4th H.L.I., consisting of Lieuts. Parr, Strachan, T. B. Clark, Burleigh, Grey, Buchanan, A. Le G. Campbell.

On Sunday, March 12th, the Battalion was transferred in barges up the Canal to El Kantara, where " A " Company was already on detachment. Kantara was the starting-point for the advance across the Sinai desert into Palestine, which was to occupy us for the next twelve months. During this year we had no fighting to do, but it would be a mistake to suppose that we had an easy or a pleasant life. Undoubtedly people at home considered that we were much to be envied, and comparing our lot with that of those fighting in France, we willingly agree. But it is a mistake to suppose that we were simply having a good time. The Egyptian Expeditionary Force was associated in the mind of the average citizen with the idea of Pyramids and flesh pots. For the first, symbolic pictures were largely to blame. There never was a design representing " Britain's far flung battle line," which did not show a comfortable man in a sun helmet with a Pyramid in the background. Pyramids are so easy to draw. The artists were beaten by the flesh pot—because they had no very clear conception of what a flesh pot looks like. But the old Biblical phrase rose irresistibly to the



mind mingled perhaps with recollections of some globe-trotter's stories of the delights of shepherds. Both ideas are quite false. Our flesh pot was the dixie—and there was a great deal less to put into it than there was on other, more canteen-blessed, fronts—while many a man who joined us early in 1916 left for France in 1918 without ever having set eyes on a Pyramid. Egypt west of the Canal and Egypt east of it are two very different countries, and when transports took to hooking up beside the Canal banks at Kantara, and discharging their defrauded drafts there, it was only the lucky ones, who got a week's leave or a cushy wound, who ever visited the true land of the Pharaohs at all.

Until the evacuation the defence of the Canal and of the eastern frontier of Egypt had depended almost entirely on the waterless nature of the 130 miles of country which separated it from Palestine. There were troops on the Canal, but their numbers and equipment forced them to remain strictly on the defensive, and Kitchener's alleged question—"Are you defending the Canal or is the Canal defending you?" was a truthful, if rather an unfair, way of summing up the situation. There was no mobile force, no supply of baggage camels, and the desert, as it faded into the mirage to the east, was an unknown country in which Turkish patrols moved unmolested. One of "A" Company's jobs as late as March 1916 was to accompany every evening along the Canal bank a camel dragging a heavy baulk of wood in such a way as to sweep and flatten a track in the sand, so broad that an agile Turk could not be expected to jump over it. In the morning this track was carefully scrutinised, and it was possible to see whether anybody besides the ants and beetles, who had a right of way, had gone across it during the night, and if so steps would be taken, as required.

But General Murray with troops at his disposal did not propose to allow this state of affairs to continue. The routes by which a hostile force could advance on Egypt from

the east were limited, and the southern ones, through very difficult mountainous country, were unlikely if not impossible, especially when raiders or aeroplanes had destroyed the stores of water in the rock cisterns. The northern route lay close along the sea coast, through a desert of heavy sand, in which at many places water, which most horses refused, but which seemed good enough for a Turk, could be obtained by digging wells. This route bent south-westward from Romani and reached the Canal at Kantara, and it was this route that he determined to block by advancing eastward along it himself.

The Kantara of the spring of 1916 was very different to the great town of camps and metalled roads, lines of sheds and pyramids of stores, canteens, and Y.M.C.A.s, lorry parks and hospitals, real nurses and a cinema, which became familiar to hundreds of thousands of troops on their way up to Palestine in 1917-1918. Even the cemetery was only wired off during our occupation, and one remembers being somewhat ribald at the pessimism of the authorities who provided sufficient consecrated ground to contain the bodies of all the troops then garrisoning the place. As usual the authorities scored in the long run.

Its pre-war amenities were distinctly limited. On the west side of the Canal ran the line from Ismalia to Port Said, with a station and some square plastered houses occupied by native officials of the E.S.R. and Canal services. The Sweet Water Canal, an insignificant ditch full of dirty water, divided the line from the big Canal, and the low trees, which grew along its banks, gave the only pleasing view in a desolate land. The euphemistically named "sweet water" contained a large number of Bilharzia parasite, an interesting little creature, whose ancestors have been found embedded in the Egyptian mummies. It begins its life in a water snail, transfers itself through the mouth and skin to the body of any human being it can, and there makes hay of his or

her internal arrangements in a peculiarly distressing manner. All Egyptians are bilharziotic and seem to thrive on it ; but we were strictly forbidden in our own interests to give the little beast an entrée. Behind the line were salt marshes and sand. East of the Canal were two or three palm trees, a little mosque and a couple of Custom Houses—and that was all. The beginning of the offensive defensive had built a road running eastward for a mile or two with a light railway parallel to it, while a little further to the north was the terminus of the broad gauge railway, on which the whole scheme depended. On the plans of Kantara which were issued on arrival this railway line was marked Kantara-Jerusalem Railway, which caused many an amusing remark regarding the possibilities of its ever reaching there. Little did we then think that many of us would travel to and from Jerusalem and beyond on that very line.

Our camp was a mile or so from the Canal, to the north of the road—first the officers' lines, then a space for a parade ground, then the men's lines. The sand was very heavy, but of a coarse kind which did not blow about much. The tents were double and made a pleasant enough home for a couple of officers with camp beds, but were less attractive to from eight to a dozen men, lying in the sand with all their possessions. To the eastward was the cemetery and then the ground rose into one or two insignificant little bluffs, afterwards sinking to a small flat area of harder ground, on which most of our parades were held. Beyond this was the barbed wire and redoubt line of the Kantara defences, of which more anon. To the north joining with the lakes and marshes round Pelusium, lay patches of shallow salt water, inundated by cuts from the Canal as part of the defensive scheme.

The strength of the Battalion on arrival was little over 300. "A" Company remained on detachment till 23rd of March a couple of miles off on the Canal bank, where they spent



SUEZ CANAL AT BALLAH.





their nights in patrolling the eastern bank and their days in watching the shipping pass, bathing and attempting to catch fish from an ancient tub attached to the post. On one occasion they had the mild excitement of stopping a suspected tug which was reported from further south as steaming up at a time when it had no business to be out and refusing to answer signals. Furious commands to stop were disregarded, but a single rifle bullet across her bows had an almost magical effect, and the "boarding party" gallantly rowing out in the tub were harangued by a weeping Greek skipper in six different languages without a pause until the arrival of an official of the Water Transport Department, disguised as a very immaculate subaltern of Yeomanry. No one ever quite discovered what it was all about; but the skipper having at last become comparatively coherent in French, we put on board a prize crew in the person of the Yeoman, and let her go.

For the rest of the Battalion there were no such thrills. Parades were from 6.30 to 9.30 and for a couple of hours from 4.30 p.m. The companies were not large enough to be subdivided into platoons, and the nature of the country confined us chiefly to squad drill and musketry. The intervening leisure was spent in conversation—mercifully we have all got mouths and can continue to use them long after our stock of novel ideas is exhausted. There were also frequent bathing parades. The Suez Canal is not well adapted for bathing. It is extremely dirty, because every ship that passes drains into it, and after a few feet of rather muddy shallow, it drops suddenly out of a man's depth, so that the non-swimmer finds his range limited. But with a hot climate and very little washing water, one is not inclined to be exacting. Our drinking water was the less attractive for being so strongly chlorinated. It was supplied from the Sweet-Water Canal after a vigorous filtering, and we continued to patronise the same source right through the desert, and

even when we were fighting in another continent in front of Gaza.

The authorities soon found us a job or two to occupy our leisure. The Egyptian Labour Corps had not yet arrived on the scenes and the digging of the Kantara defences consequently devolved upon the white troops. This meant six hours' digging almost every day for almost every man, divided into a morning and an afternoon shift. Now sand is admittedly nice easy stuff to dig in, you do not need a pick, and can fill your shovel without exertion. But no trench in sand is the faintest use unless it is revetted. Our revetting material was matting on wooden frames, and these had to be anchored back to stakes driven in deep down, six feet clear of the parapet or parados, so that to produce a trench you had to take out six feet of sand extra on either side, hammer in your stakes and attach your anchoring wires to the matting and then fill in the whole again. Traverses had to be dug right out and then filled in again when the wall of matting was in position and secure. Progress was therefore not rapid, and especially on windy days when most of the sand was blown off your shovel before you had time to throw it and the wind silted it up in your excavation rather quicker than you could take it out. Still all this work, together with the wiring, was done thoroughly if slowly, and it was depressing to see next year that now that the war had been carried into the enemies' country, all our redoubts had been carefully filled in.

Other diversions provided for us took the form of unloading barges or loading trucks, and for some of these jobs it was necessary to cross to the western side of the Canal. On the outward journey there was never any difficulty about this, but on the homeward some such scene as the following was almost certain to occur. As the fatigue party—thirty men under an officer—reach the end of the pontoon bridge, after a hot afternoon in the ordnance depot, a cloud of natives hurl

themselves upon it from either end and proceed to haul it in two halves under the whip-cracking of their own headman and the fatherly advice of an R.E. corporal. Looking up the Canal the fatigue party, already late for their dinners, perceive a P. & O. liner about four miles away majestically crawling south. Their only hope is now the horse-ferry, an aged flat-bottomed contrivance wound across by a squad of natives and a chain. With the assistance of a friendly military policeman, the headman of this gang is discovered some hundred of yards away lying asleep with his feet in the Sweet-Water Canal, Bilharziosis doubtless entering at every pore. When aroused he breaks into a voluble flood of Arabic—the M.P., an Argyle in disguise, addresses him in Scotch at a similar rate, while the O.C. fatigue party speaks very slowly in English, French, and what he believes to be modern Greek, successively. At this game the gippy always wins, and it is only when, confessing their defeat, the opposition resorts to personal violence that he goes off weeping to beat up his team, having been fully aware from the first that that was what was required. The officer in premature triumph embarks his party in the ferry, into which enter also some horses, two camels and a motor bike. The horses are naturally very frightened. The fatigue climbing to precarious footholds on the rails at the side, leave them the bottom of the boat to be frightened in. Then, screaming like a flock of sea gulls, the children of Pharaoh arrive, and their chief, looking wisely across the river, perceives a barge which he feels sure will be in our way. He therefore shouts to it, the officer—adding the voice of authority, shouts too—the men shout, the natives shout, everybody shouts. The barge crew shout back, but are finally out-shouted and haul clear. The foreman, seeing that he will now lose the game and have thus prematurely to take the party over, suddenly perceives the advancing P. & O., now not much more than a mile away. He draws



the distracted officer's attention to the phenomenon and leads him to understand that to start now would lead to an inevitable collision and a watery grave. The polyglot argument waxes furious, the men taking it up in their turn, when their leader falls out exhausted, and the Arab is still keeping up his end triumphantly when the great ship reaches us and slowly steams by, while curious passengers eye us from her decks, their minds doubtless running enviously on flesh pots. After this, resort is again had to violence and the ill-assorted load slowly leaves the shore and commences its perilous journey, the horses still in paroxysms of terror and the camels supercilious and bored. Long before the other bank is reached all concerned have handsomely apologised to the headman for having doubted his statement that they could not have got across before the liner arrived. But at last they reach ground and so to their dinners, tired but cheerful still. The only time, by the way, that this accomplished Egyptian condescended to speak English was when a party of men returning at night from leave in Port Said, exasperated by his delays, had taken the matter into their own hands, and were working the ferry across themselves. He lifted up his voice and wept,—no one heeded him. Then again and again he cried the mystic words, “he drink water—he drink water.” He was sternly adjured to be silent, until suddenly another voice was heard—“the —— thing's sinking.” “Aiwa, aiwa,” said the disregarded prophet—“he drink water”—and all hands pulled madly to get the boat back to the nearest side—of course the side from which it had started. Those who have studied the diplomatic wiles of our hero, are convinced that he had himself opened the sea-cocks—or taken what other steps were necessary to scuttle his craft and save his honour.

Another fatigue, which was highly unpopular, took place in relays from 6 p.m. to 10, or from 10 to 2 a.m. The scene was the goods yard of the railway where trucks had to be

loaded with great bales of forage, sacks of grain, or cases of bully and biscuit for the personnel at railhead. Snatched from the tender care of their officers, the men were delivered over to N.C.O.'s of an unknown breed, probably a cross between R.E. and A.S.C. and Ordnance Corps, with a highly technical jargon picked up in happier days in the goods yards of English railways. Great naphtha flares cast a blinding light, dispelling the friendly gloom on which every right-minded private relies, if unlucky enough to have to work at night. The still air is solid with dust, increased every moment as G.S. waggons, each drawn by a team of maddened mules, enter the yard at a hand gallop, scattering all in their path. The atmosphere is one of strenuous profanity, most uncongenial to the unhappy infantry. At last the officer in charge—ironic phrase—determines that time is up and raises a feeble outcry amid the din. Fortunately the sheep know their shepherd, and will hear his voice. The men fall in and he listens to complaints and soothes the indignant. One man laid his tunic down and a mule ate a great bit out of it. Another cannot get his arm straight “after lifting thae bales.” A still, small voice asserts that a man has as much chance of doing what the R.E. wants, as a gnat has of fighting a —— aeroplane. The sergeant numbers them off. There is of course one missing ; but the officer, being certain that he is either a mangled corpse among the mules, or far more probably triumphantly asleep on a stack of tibbin, declines to search for him, and the party steps out for home, are challenged by a pessimistic sentry, dismissed, and, stumbling over their recumbent comrades, find an unoccupied corner of their tents, and sleep the sleep of the just till réveillé—and after, if possible.

Such was life, broken by an occasional Sunday's rest with the Divisional Band, or at any rate two men with cornets to help with the singing at Church Parade. Services were often held under difficulties, but one has heard of no sadder

case than that of the Padre who went off to hold a parade for some transport men stationed near the railway line. He had no hymn books but, being an optimist, chose well-known hymns and one of the officers present sang them with him. During the second hymn a train load of natives came up, and, the signal being against it, came to a halt in close proximity. The Egyptian is a kindly soul, and judging that the white men were making a very poor effort in their rejoicings, the whole lot of them broke into one of their insane chants, stamping their feet and clapping their hands in time to the music and smiling encouragement on the indignant Padre the while. Hastily breaking off the hymn, the latter commenced an eloquent address, but the engine driver, a godless man, whose small mind was fixed on getting home to his tent, suddenly opened out his whistle and kept it going as a hint to the forgetful signal-man who was holding him up, and the sorely tried Padre, losing his nerve at this final outrage, "washed out" the Parade, and retired defeated.

Only too often Sunday was chosen for some form of frightfulness, which could not logically be called a fatigue, but which was really far worse. It was on a Sunday that the whole Battalion, bearing on their backs every stitch of their kit, repaired to the E.S.R. station, and surrendered their belongings to be placed in waggons and subjected to super-heated steam. Not only were successive volunteers almost boiled alive in premature efforts to enter the waggons after the doors were reopened ; not only was everyone's kit mixed up with everyone else's and the garments, when recovered, found to be creased and mangled in incredible ways ; not only was the whole Battalion left standing at ease, dressed solely in boots and sun helmets, while the Port Said express moved slowly past them ; but, when all was over, it was found that our little friends had considered the steriliser merely as a new form of incubator to help their offspring to hatch out.



The weather on the whole was passable. In March there were days of strong west wind which were really chilly. In April it began to warm up, and the thermometer in the tents—and a tent with flaps gave us the best shade temperature we could find—reached 100° before the end of the month. The “khamseen,” a south wind, hot as the blast of a furnace, bringing with it clouds of dust and flying sand, darkening the sun, and making a fog in which we could not see half across the parade ground, smote us at irregular intervals in April and May. No words are bad enough for the “khamseen.” People who live in Cairo in good stone houses with blinds and lots of ice regard it with horror. In the desert it was infinitely worse. One day early in May an officer’s tent was at 118°, while the crowded homes of the men must have been far hotter.

About this time H.R.H. The Prince of Wales paid a visit to the E.E.F. and was present as a member of the Staff of General Murray when the latter inspected the troops stationed at Kantara. Each battalion was drawn up by half-battalions in close columns of platoons in front of the camp, and although the inspection occupied a very short time, the delay was almost sufficient to cause three senior officers, the first of the battalion to be granted local leave, to miss the one o’clock luncheon express to Cairo. They caught it with difficulty and great effort, and it is reported that their lunch consisted largely of iced beer.

On April 23rd, Easter Sunday, the Turks raided the Katia oasis, twenty-five miles to the east of us, and cut up the Yeomanry who held it. Another body advanced to Dueidar, some ten miles nearer us, and were gallantly held off by a company of R.S.F. That evening the Brigade was moved out at short notice and marched to Hill 40 in the dark. Here we bivouacked, and spent a chilly night, while Anzac cavalry passed through us and moved on the threatened spot, which was far out of reach of infantry. The next day



the rumours that reached us left little doubt that it was no more than a clever raid by the Turks, but we spent the day, and a very hot one it was, without shelter in the sand, disturbed firstly by the information that we should be fighting hard by dawn the next day, and again by the message that the Turks were seen advancing in large numbers. This proved to be the Egyptian Labour Corps in hasty retreat from the neighbourhood of Katia. On the 25th we returned to our camp, which we did not quit again until May 17th.

The post at Dueidar was an isolated detachment garrisoning an oasis in which the Bedouin were in the habit of holding a weekly market. These gentry were rounded up after the Easter day disaster, but the oasis still needed a guard, because in the desert an area where drinkable water can be found is more valuable than Alsace Lorraine and the Saar Valley put together. The true infantry line of defence however was still further back. About eight miles from the Canal a line of redoubts had been built, spanning the gap between protective inundations and barring the way to Kantara. Half a mile further out lay a marvellous trench, the work of forgotten heroes, since transferred to France, a straight line of carefully sand-bagged fire bays and traverses which it would have taken a small army to hold, running as if laid down with a ruler across the desert without either support line or communication trenches. The redoubt system was far more economical in men and each separate redoubt formed a strong point well supplied with ammunition and water, which could give a very good account of itself.

To this line the Battalion moved on May 17th, taking over at dawn next morning from the K.O.S.B. The two main redoubts were at Hill 70 itself, where Battalion Headquarters lived with "A" Company and half of "C," and at Turk Top garrisoned by "B" Company. Three smaller redoubts were held by "D" and the other half of "C," and there were intermediate posts occupied by small detachments only

at night. Life was more pleasant out here. We still had tents outside the wire in which we lived by day, manning the trenches at night. There was a good deal of work to be done on the redoubts, but it was work with an obvious purpose, and we were glad to be on our own and free from the clutches of those obscure magnates who detail divisional fatigues. Our digging we got through between stand down and breakfasts in the cool of the morning, or else in the late afternoon. At night we posted sentries and went on long adventurous patrols from post to post. There was no enemy ; but the desert itself still had a certain amount of mystery and romance about it. It was less flat than round Kantara and dotted here and there with coarse, green scrub, while a mile to the south of Hill 70 stood a little group of seven palms. Away to the east rose great hills of golden sand, very beautiful when the rays of the setting sun struck upon them. To show our unsophisticated attitude at this time, it may be admitted that when a credulous machine gunner informed us—doubtless on Australian authority—that the trails of two “Arabian” lions had been found not a mile away, we more than half believed him.

The flies were bad, but we were getting used to the heat—the tent temperature was usually between 100° and 110° during the hotter hours,—and a northerly wind helped to keep us going. On the 20th a pair of 18 pounders were put into Hill 70 and another pair into the Turk Top Redoubt, and their gunners, of the 2nd Lowland Brigade R.F.A., came to live with us. The guns were well dug in, but there was a general feeling that if they fired, most of the trenches, which were only a few feet away, would inevitably collapse. At Hill 70 Captain Wightman and Captain Moir joined the Battalion, with very little to say in favour of the Egyptian climate and obviously feeling the extreme heat.

Early in June astonishing rumours began to reach us about a “change of air” camp at Alexandria, and soon it

came to be known that the whole Brigade were for a week's holiday there. The cynics scoffed, and the few who were anxious to display the fruits of a classical education could quote a line about "fearing the Greeks even when they bear gifts in their hands," the Greeks to us being that inveterate foe of every right-minded infantry man, until he gets a chance of putting up red tabs himself,—the Staff. But for once the cynics were wrong, and on June 13th the 11th Manchesters arrived to relieve us, and we marched gaily back to Kantara—at any rate if not gaily—it was getting on for 130° in the sun quite early in the day—still with a good heart. We were even complaisant when we found ourselves crowded into one camp area with the 7th, and with most of the tents to put up. As the afternoon wore on—(we had been up since 3 a.m. and were still hard at it in different fatigues)—a tendency to disparage holidays was noticed in some quarters, and when the next day we found ourselves in for a resumption of training pending further orders, the cynics had their innings. It lasted a fortnight—of crowded tents and extreme heat—the thermometer failing to fall much below 90° all night. Réveillé was at 4 a.m. and after three hours training, we came in for an eight o'clock breakfast, drenched in sweat, and regarding salt bacon with loathing. To add to the trials of the climate the entire Battalion was roused one night about midnight with orders to make all tents as secure as possible, hammer in tent pegs, etc., as the following message had just been received, "Typhoon proceeding north passed Suez 9 p.m." Few if any of us had ever experienced a typhoon and with thoughts of very shortly being blown here and there like the sand we set to work with a will, but unnecessarily. The great wind never came, and we learnt in the morning that the "Typhoon" that passed Suez was a tramp steamer homeward bound. But the optimists were not to be disappointed. On the 26th an advance party left us, and on the evening of the 28th the whole Battalion, with

the exception of some few of the later drafts, entrained and reached Sidi Bishr next morning, smutty but hopeful.

Sidi Bishr rest camp was unlike anything that the oldest soldier can remember. It was run with the sole desire of making everybody happy. The tents were in the desert east of the town, half a mile from the sea. The men had no duties of any kind. No parades were allowed and there were special cooks and orderly men attached to each camp. On arrival the camp staff took the men over from their officers, who were told that they had no further responsibilities and could go off and enjoy themselves for a week. Every man was then given a pass into Alexandria, good up to 11 p.m. every night of the week, while for those whose finances could not stand this strain there were free concerts and cinemas in the camp itself, and a whole village of enticing restaurants and shops where fruit, drinks and souvenirs could be obtained. One need hardly say that the Battalion, keenly appreciating the kindness shown and the confidence reposed in them, repaid it by exemplary behaviour. There was hardly a case of drunkenness throughout our stay—no bad record for men who had been teetotal, through necessity and not through choice, for months—and were now exposed to the dangers of the vile though seductive liquor sold in the native bars.

Our holiday came to an end all too soon and we returned to Kantara in excellent form for whatever might be demanded of us. A draft joined us a few days after our return with Lieut. Girvan and our Quartermaster, Lieut. Clark. Plainly the days of sitting on the banks of the Canal and waiting till Turkey chose to attack us were gone for ever. The whole force was pushing slowly but surely to the east, and it was high time for us to help them push.



## CHAPTER VII

### THE SINAI DESERT—MAHAMDIYA, ROMANI, KATIA.

ON the 10th of July, after handing over to the 5th Manchesters, the Battalion entrained for Mahamdiya. The curse was pronounced against it, "On thy flat feet shalt thou go—and dust shalt thou eat"; and it did not entrain again until it left Ludd at the begininng of the journey to France nearly two years later. The accumulation of stores resulting from several months comparatively civilised life had to be sorted out, and all but the barest necessities were left behind—a process which was constantly being repeated as the advance through the desert continued, the necessities becoming successively barer and barer. Two trains were required for the Battalion and its possessions, one leaving at 7.17 a.m. and the other at 4.15 p.m. They were composed of open trucks in which the men were packed with little regard to comfort. It was not a luxurious journey, but fortunately it was not a long one. After skirting the inundations the line ran for some miles across almost flat desert, and then entered a country of sand hills, writhing and twisting among the tumbled ridges till it reached Romani. Here we passed on to a branch line which took us north to the coast.

Our camp at Mahamdiya had been occupied by the Scottish Horse. It was pitched on a slope of sand less than a mile from the railway, and half a mile or so from the sea. The sea was the great feature of Mahamdiya. Its deep

blueness rested the eye, wearied by the perpetual glare of the sand. The prevailing north wind blowing straight off it tempered the heat—and most important of all, it gave us the opportunity of being cool and clean for a delicious half-hour as often as we could spare the time to get down to it. No parade, not even the infrequent “fall in for pay,” was so welcome as a bathing parade. Our supply of fresh water was extremely limited, and as drinking comes with most of us before washing, we should have been a dirty lot indeed without the sea. Even as it was, salt water, like a famous soap, won't wash clothes, and our hosiery suffered accordingly. Drinking water was issued at stated intervals, in the presence of an officer—and that was another occasion on which there were no absentees.

Some way east of the camp ran a line of barbed wire in a great sweep from the sea to the south, finally turning west to protect the whole locality. Behind it was a series of little posts occupied nightly by half the Battalion, while the rest slept in camp. The most northerly post was not a popular one. The roar of the surf forced the sentries to rely entirely on their eyesight ; while the alarming number of marauding crabs, which manoeuvred over the area all night, gave one an uneasy feeling which usually begot a nightmare.

In front of the outpost line lay a great expanse of dry salt-lake, separated from the sea by a hundred yards or so of sand dune, and stretching away as far as the eye could reach, a sheet of greyish white. These dry lakes or marshes, Sabkhet, to give them their local name, are a feature of northern Sinai. One very large one, at whose western extremity we now were, runs most of the way across the top of the Peninsula, and is believed to have been the famous Serbonian Bog of the Classics. In places its surface gleams white with salt crystals, covering a mass of hard irregular lumps said to be formed of gypsum, which makes walking almost impossible. Further inland, smaller marshes were

often met with, and a hole dug in them soon filled with bitter water, quite undrinkable, but valuable to wash away the sand. South of the great Sabkhet, the everlasting sand ridges began again, spotted with clumps and low bushes of scrub, and rising in the distance to pure yellow hills entirely without vegetation.

A mile or so to the east of our outpost line, the permanent defences were being constructed by the Egyptian Labour Corps, now recruited to do the sand shovelling, which had fallen to our lot at Kantara. Every morning bands of blue-clad gippies moved out from their lairs behind us, in rough, very rough, military formation, singing their doubtless primeval but rather idiotic chants, laughing, shouting, and generally enjoying life in a way which we admired, but could not imitate. Arrived at their redoubts they shovelled and sandbagged away under the direction of the versatile R.E., with a rest during the hottest part of the day, until the evening saw their equally noisy and cheerful return to camp. We were glad they enjoyed it, but felt no envious desire to share their labours with them.

In spite of the breeze off the sea the weather remained extremely hot. Heavy dews often fell at night, causing mist at dawn, which forced the outpost companies to stand to arms for an extra hour or more ; on July 13th we indignantly stood to from 3 a.m. to 8 a.m. for this reason. When the sun was well up, there came the most trying part of the day, while the dew-laden atmosphere was drying. The temperature rose till the thermometer inside the tents registered anything from 95° to 110°, but the heat became less oppressive when the moisture had vanished from the air. What training we did was reserved whenever possible for the evening, and even so it was hard work. An entry in the War Diary reads, " 14/7/16. 1700 to 1930. Battalion Route March towards Romani over heavy sand. Distance under four miles, but men much fatigued ! " Four miles

in two and a half hours gives some idea of the nature of the going, and there was no extra tot of water to be issued on return to camp.

We were now in an area in which even the optimistic Ordnance Survey (who in the chatty little notes they append to their maps, characterised the local water supply as "abundant though varying in quality") considered wheeled transport as impracticable. In consequence our nodding acquaintanceship with camels ripened quickly into an undesired familiarity. There is a touch of oriental romance about the camel, as the mile long convoys loom up through the night and pass in uncanny silence, slow but untiring across the moonlit desert. It was romantic even to see a string returning to camp, their day's work over, with the camel escort swaying high in air, rope bridle in hand and rifle on hip, as if they had been bred in Somaliland instead of Glasgow. But the romance did not carry one very far. Orders from Headquarters soon put an end to free rides even on unloaded camels. The eye might be charmed by the stately motion of the creature but the nose was offended by its exceedingly unpleasant smell. Camels are very delicate. They must not be overloaded or overworked. Their saddles gall them with surprising ease and rapidity, and are extremely difficult to pack. They have vile tempers, and in late autumn become frankly impossible. The native word "macnoon," by the way, in spite of its suggestion of respectable Highland clans, was regarded as the only one adequate to describe a camel at this time of year, and was therefore added to our vocabulary. They are noisy, vicious, unaccommodating and aggravating to a degree. A lance-corporal of the Battalion of great girth and tank-like prowess in the football field was always ready to bear bitter testimony to their man-eating proclivities, and no doubt still regards it as a distinct intervention of Providence that he lost no more than the seat of his shorts.



The peaceful life of our seaside resort was soon destroyed by rumours that the Turks were moving. On the evening of July 19th, an aeroplane reconnaissance discovered a considerable force of them at Bir el Abd, some twenty-five miles to the east of us, and noticed smaller parties much nearer. The Turkish feat of moving a force, then reckoned at from 8000 to 9000 men, fifty miles from El Arish without our being aware of it, was a very fine one, and when it is remembered that they attacked us at Romani, seventy-five miles from their base, with 18,000 men and artillery up to 6 inch howitzers, everyone who has felt what the desert is like in July will be full of admiration. Nor can one wonder at the fact established by our all-wise Intelligence, that prisoners captured had sore feet. The first ripples of the commotion produced by this report reached us at 1 a.m. on the 20th, when the Adjutant was summoned to Brigade Headquarters. At 2.45 a.m. half "C" Company moved out to take over Redoubt No. 10, and later in the morning "B" Company garrisoned No. 8 and "D" Company No. 11, while the rest of "C" Company occupied 10A. These redoubts, though habitable, were still unfinished. They were part of the defences mentioned above as being in the hands of the Egyptian Labour Corps, a chain of posts running south past Romani and then turning west among the sand hills. The garrisons had at once to set to and improve their position, strengthen their wire and finish off the fire bays. At 10A a signal station had to be established in mid-desert some hundreds of yards from the redoubt, owing to a temporary shortage of signal wire. Signallers are naturally imperturbable, but the officer in charge confessed to a thrill of horror when, having with some difficulty made his way to his signal station at midnight and been handed the receiver, even as he uttered the preliminary "Hullo," the instrument suddenly sprang from his grasp and rushed off into the darkness. Mastering an almost overpowering desire



IN A REDOUBT, MAHAMDIYA.



to run for the redoubt, he assisted two signallers to investigate and discovered that the wire had caught in the foot of a straying camel, which had proceeded on its thoughtless way with the receiver attached.

But as is usual in desert warfare, time passed and nothing happened. "B" Company were relieved in No. 8 by the 53rd Division and rejoined "A" Company in camp. The other garrisons got into tents which they pitched in the ground behind the redoubts, so that the majority of the men could have shelter by day. At night the trenches were manned, and all was ready for an attack at dawn. But with the exception of some bomb-dropping raids by their planes, the enemy remained passive. The Australian Light Horse reported that he was busy digging in on a line through Oghratina, some miles east of Katia, and we began to think that he intended to put the onus of attacking on to us. The fear, however, was unfounded, he was only completing his preparations, and on the night of August 3rd-4th he advanced and occupied Katia.

This movement was reported, and "A" and "B" Companies, who had by now relieved "C" and "D" in the redoubts, were warned that the attack was now almost certain. Before dawn on the 4th a bombardment began, but its entire force fell a mile or two to the south of us upon the Romani defences; the Turkish plan being to attack there and, if possible, to turn our right flank. All the morning the artillery fire continued, our reply being strengthened by the "crack of doom imitations" of a couple of monitors out at sea to the north of No. 11. Little or no news filtered through to us, and the redoubt companies spent a hot day in their trenches, which were but ill suited for permanent occupation, while the reduction in the water issue, made necessary by the fear of future difficulties in refilling the storage tanks, started a thirst which was not appeased for many days. During the night, however, we



heard enough to assure us that things were going well, and early on the 5th we received orders to leave the redoubts to a garrison of the unfit and to rendezvous in the old camp, prepared for a "mobile."

About midday the Battalion moved off, "A" and "C" Companies having only just arrived from the redoubts after a wakeful night and a heavy morning's work, and already thirsty, though no more water could be issued. A single water bottle, once filled, is but a poor supply for a long day under the Egyptian sun. Marching over heavy sand in the hot hours, even when the haversack has replaced the pack, soon produces an unparalleled drought. Sweat runs into a man's eyes and drips from his chin. It runs down his arms and trickles from his fingers. It drenches his shirt and leaves great white streaks on his equipment. And while so much is running out, the desire to put something in grows and grows. The temptation to take a mouthful becomes well nigh irresistible, and once the bottle of sun-heated chlorine-flavoured water is put to the lips, it is almost impossible to put it down before its precious contents are gone. Then a man becomes hopeless and there is danger of his falling out. All honour to those, and they were many, who through age or sickness, had greater difficulty in keeping up than the rest of us, but who yet carried on indomitably to the end, or only gave in when they had reached a stage of complete collapse. How often in such hours have we felt that if only we could live where one may have an unlimited supply of water just by turning on a tap, we should be content for ever. But are we, my friends? I fear not.

One cannot help feeling that the comparison made with the performances of regular battalions in the heat of India before the war, are unfair. These were trained men, caught young and developed to a high standard of physical fitness, marching along the excellent Indian roads, with a certainty of a good water supply at their night's camping place, and

accompanied in many cases by travelling canteens and soda water machines. In our ranks were to be found many men of middle age, unused to active life, and many boys whose physique had not had time to respond to military training. Some had but recently joined us and were not acclimatised, others had not recovered their strength after the dysentery of Gallipoli. Roads or canteens there were none. Of course British troops have often found themselves in such conditions and worse on active service. But it is interesting to find that that fine old soldier R.S.M. Mathieson, always said that he personally never suffered from thirst to anything like the same degree during the Egyptian campaign of 1882.

We left the Battalion moving off S.E. from the camp for the Brigade rendezvous. Here we received orders to attack a "hod" named Abu Hamrah, which lay between us and Katia. The distance was not great, hardly six miles as the crow flies, but we were not crows and had to adopt less direct as well as more laborious methods. The Battalion was on the right in support to the 7th H.L.I., and the march continued with but short halts till 4 p.m., when we had a somewhat longer pause, and a chance to reinforce our early breakfasts. Few men, however, can eat either bully beef or biscuit when they are thirsty, and that was all we had. It always seemed strange that we should not have made more use of food more suitable to the climate. Later on dried figs and occasionally little dried apricots were issued with the mobile ration. Doubtless these are not very sustaining, but they are the fruit of the country, and it is better to have a little you can eat than a full ration that you cannot, whatever the decrease in caloric value may be.

There was neither sound nor sign of enemy opposition, and the advance was resumed in artillery formation in an hour or so. Darkness began to fall and great difficulty was experienced in keeping touch with the battalion in front and even between the different companies, a difficulty

increased by the first line camels of the 7th, who were perpetually, though inevitably, getting in our way. When daylight had actually failed it must be admitted the Brigade had become somewhat disintegrated. The Argylls did not regain touch till next morning. The Battalion, minus "A" Company, who had been cut off by some camels and thus entered Abu Hamrah on their own, got up on the right of the 7th, where the errant company eventually discovered it.

Immediately strings of camels now appeared on all sides marching and counter-marching across everybody's front, holding up exasperated and desperate platoon commanders, who finally ruthlessly cut them in two and forged ahead to a chorus of blasphemy from weary escorts and lamentations from terrified native drivers. The peaceful hod had become an inferno. No one knew anything except that there were no Turks. After superhuman efforts on the part of various exalted personages, things were straightened out, pickets detailed and posted, and the men, too tired even to swear, dropped where they were, and rapidly cooled down in the chilly dew. It was now nearly eleven o'clock, and a half bottle of water was issued, enough merely to whet the consuming thirst which gripped everybody. Tunics were disentangled from the damp congeries on our backs and we had a few hours' precious sleep.

At 3 a.m. we stood to and began to dig ourselves in, in positions sited with extreme difficulty, in unknown country, in the dark. Soon, however, orders were received to prepare to move, and in spite of every effort, not more than half the men had had their bottles filled before we had to continue the advance. It was a very hot steamy morning, and the coolness of dawn soon disappeared. The advance was slow, and we grew thirstier and thirstier whether we moved or halted. On reaching a ridge overlooking Rabah and Katia it was found that the leading battalions were too far to the left. We and the Argylls were therefore ordered to turn



right-handed and occupy Katia. The dark line of palms appeared very enticing, if very far away, and the Battalion struggled manfully on, shedding the weaker brethren as it went and, very nearly "all out," reached its objective about 10 a.m.

Our troubles were now nearly over. There were no enemy, and the trees gave us a grateful shade, which only "B" Company, pushed forward to hold an outpost line on the far bridge, had to forgo. A fine stone well was found in the oasis with a good supply of cool, though curious tasting water, and canteens were soon being let down into it at the end of puttees in a hopeless effort to cope with our thirst, after which the bolder spirits went so far as to nibble a ration biscuit. But one cannot help reflecting on what might have been the consequences for us if the Turks had adopted the German policy of well-poisoning.

We afterwards heard that the Turks, evacuating Abu Hamrah on our approach, had taken up a strong rear guard position at Katia, and had beaten off the cavalry, who had retired behind us to water their horses and get a much needed night's rest. The Turks had seized their opportunity and slipped away during the night. As far as we were concerned they were welcome to slip.

The story of the Battle of Romani can be read elsewhere. It was not an infantry show—at any rate on our side—though elements of the 52nd Division saw some fighting. No praise can be too high for the endurance and fine fighting quality of our cavalry, both Anzac and English. And it is reckoned that the Turks lost a good half of their force, either killed or captured, before they outdistanced the mounted pursuit.

The Battalion remained at Katia until August 14th. The oasis consisted of a broad crescent of palm trees running for two or three miles round a sabkhet. Great clusters of dates hung from most of the trees—but they were still unripe, not sour or bitter but very hard and with a curious



stringent taste. The Turks had plainly considered them a valuable addition to their rations—for in every Turkish trench and sniper's hole we found their stones and sticks ; and while we were free of the well-water we found that we could make them quite palatable by boiling them in a canteen. In the middle of the circle of palms stood a little mosque or Sheikh's tomb with a big dark tree, perhaps a tamarisk, beside it, and bricks and other remains showed that there had at some time been other modest dwelling-places in the neighbourhood.

At night we usually moved out to an outpost line in the sand ridges beyond the oasis. The Turks dropped a few shells along these on the 6th, but after that the fighting, still kept up by the cavalry, moved far out of range to the east. By day the bulk of the force came down among the trees, while the outpost companies were able to rig up some kind of shelter from the sun with the blankets which camels had brought up by the 9th, one to two men. Providence perpetrated a huge practical joke when it designed the palm to be the only tree which will grow in the desert. From a distance it looks well, but when the weary traveller approaches and proposes to rest beneath its shade, he finds he has to choose between the thin shadow of the trunk, not wide enough to shelter him, and the little blob of shade given by the clump of leaves at the top ; this latter, coming from a point high above ground, moves round with the sun so quickly that you are hardly settled in it before it has glided away, and you must chase it round in a great un-restful circle. However, whenever the trees are thick on the ground the difficulty is not so great—our trouble came rather from other causes. The oasis was full of men. Part of the 42nd had come up on our right, and Headquarters and details of the Anzacs and Camel Corps were on our left. The area had recently been occupied by the Turks who are not a clean race, and before that, cavalry had used it for

some months. Not far away lay the remains of camels and horses slaughtered in the Turkish raid in April, while the dead of the recent fighting lay unburied all round the neighbourhood. The E.E.F. were experts in sanitation, but sanitary stores and appliances had not yet reached us, and the ground beneath the trees was frankly filthy. Flies of course abounded. We had little to do and less to eat—bully and biscuits and none too much of it. The biscuit supply had struck a bad patch and most of the tins were found to harbour various forms of animal life—reputed to be weevils. They could be eaten with impunity—we knew that by experience—but that did not make the biscuits more appetising.

The Turkish planes bombed us daily but with little success. Their bombs were of small size and the sand seemed somehow to smother them, so that they were more noisy than dangerous. The men who had fallen out rejoined us as best they could, the worst of them being removed to hospitals, and by the 14th we were well rested and ready for “the road” again.

The preparations for departure began as usual with the laying out of stores in camel loads. A camel's load has to be nicely calculated. He must not carry more than a certain amount, about 350 lbs.—if he carries less you can't get everything on—and the load must be evenly divided between the two sides of his saddle. With water, carried in the tanks holding about twelve gallons—called fantassies—and with S.A.A. blankets, this is easy enough, but with tools and the miscellaneous stores belonging to the scouts, Lewis gunners, cooks, doctor, sanitary men, signallers and all kinds of specialists the problem is far more complicated, and the loading officer has usually made a large number of enemies before the day is over. Some seventy camels were attached to each battalion, camping under their own headman somewhere near and sending in daily parties to draw rations and

water from the A.S.C. The camels were under the orders of the Commanding Officer, and the Quartermaster's department detailed the numbers required for each trip. The difficulty came when some subordinate attempted to convey these instructions to the drivers—for we had not yet acquired that surprisingly extensive Arabic vocabulary of which we all boasted by the end of the campaign. Nor had the drivers any knowledge of English.

On this occasion the officer in command, having carefully laid out the loads at the prescribed distance and interval and quarrelled with every specialist in the Battalion, went down to the camel lines, and loudly ejaculated the only Arabic word he knew—"Rice"—believed to mean headman. (The spelling of Arabic throughout these chapters is entirely phonetic.) A majestic figure in a blue dressing-gown rose and advanced beaming. There was a pause. All the camels were required. "Alle Gamell," observed the officer hopefully. It is said that every Arabic word means some form of camel and it seemed possible that Gamell was an Arabic word. The difficulty lay rather in the "all"! Rice broke into a flood of Arabic—but gave no orders. The officer repeated his phrase, trying the conversational, wheedling, and minatory tones in turn—but it was useless. He therefore held up eighteen fingers—not of course simultaneously—eighteen being the number of camels required for one of his precious lines of loads. This was more effective. Rice fell upon his myrmidons, beat up a number of drivers, who beat up eighteen camels. The loading party assisted to beat, and so amid threatening and slaughter the first line was roughly filled, most of the camels lying down facing the wrong way, which necessitated much abuse and whirling round of the forefinger before they were shipshape. Rice, now satisfied that all was well, was horrified to perceive nineteen more fingers displayed before his nose, and the officer, seeing that time was getting short and the present



WATER CAMELS, MAHAMDIYA.





method would take an hour at least, directed his men to go straight to the point, and to attack the camels themselves. There resulted an appalling pandemonium, everyone beating everything and the camels snarling like a pack of wolves ; and at length the drivers, seeing that the white men meant business, sadly abandoned their leisure occupation of parasite hunting and rushed upon them. After receiving some of the blows intended for their charges, they managed to get most of the camels disentangled and the difficult business of loading began. The officer, however, realised that the natives had no idea that we were leaving Katia for good, and being a kind-hearted man, did not wish them to lose their few belongings. He therefore summoned Rice again, and said slowly, " Mahamdiya—Katia never no more "—accompanying the words with a gesture of violent negation. Suddenly the awful truth broke on Rice, and he set up a long and despairing howl, on which all the drivers left their charges, ran screaming to their household goods and began hastily to pack them into their bosoms. Immediately half the camels lurched to their feet with horrid sounds, began to turn round like teetotums and went a-visiting among their friends. The Mark VII. Camels, as if by instinct, sought the Mark VI. (We should perhaps remark that this refers not to a difference in the brand of camel, but to the fact that the Battalion used Mark VI. ammunition for the long rifles, with which they were still armed and Mark VII. for the Lewis guns and great care had always to be exercised to keep the two separate.) The camel with the bombs scraped off his load against the camel with the fuel. Order became chaos. The exhausted but undaunted fatigue were about to dive into the welter, when the officer observed the approach of the O.C. camel escort with his men in all their war-paint, ready for the march. Silencing his scruples he hastily called off his own party and, reporting to the unsuspecting new comer that all was in order, he fled to the trees, where

they were just in time to throw on their equipment and get into position before the column started. It need hardly be said that they felt as if they had done a hard day's work, and were already the victims of an excellent thirst before the march began.

The Battalion moved straight back to Mahamdiya, starting at 2 p.m. and arriving at 7.15 p.m. The men were very tired, but only two fell out during the march and the contrast with some other marches strengthened our belief that, given a good meal before starting, proper halts every hour, and above all, marching not in the breathless humid hours of the morning but in the drier afternoon, after the breeze had sprung up, we could cover considerable distances without loss.

We found our old camp standing, and the men gladly renewed acquaintance with the few little comforts they had left behind in their packs, while the officers revelled in regained valises and there was much very necessary bathing. "C" Company went out to No. 11 Redoubt, far the best of the line, as it was right on the sea and just in front of some old ruins which yielded a number of interesting things in the way of coins, lamps, pottery and the like. We never could find out who had lived there, but there must have been a town of some importance to judge by the size and solidity of some of the foundations. Probably it was a Greek or Greco-Roman Colony. A week later the post was taken over by two platoons of men who were unfit for heavy marching and who formed part of a newly constituted Brigade Details Company, a formation which gave us a chance of sparing many who were physically unable to stand the heavy strain of infantry work in the desert.

We remained at Mahamdiya till August 26th, occupying the inner picket line at night, and training by day. On that date the Brigade moved to er Rabah, a large palm grove, a mile or so north of Katia, which it closely resembled.

After *réveillé* at 3.45 a.m., and breakfast at 4.30, the Battalion moved off at six, reaching *er Rabah* at 11, but not being able to move into its bivouac area till 1 p.m., after which camels had to be unloaded, fires lit and *dixies* boiled before tea could be served to the men. The march was extremely trying, the nights at this season being very wet, and the hours before midday a torment of damp heat. Several men collapsed as they marched, suffering from a kind of heat-stroke. It was in this march that an unnamed hero "was three times sick in the presence of the G.O.C."—an act of courage immortalised in a Brigade order, of which the writer still possesses a treasured copy.

At *Rabah* we occupied an area some little way from the trees, but we came out provided with one blanket per man and sticks with which we could rig up bivouacs. Two poles were stuck up in the sand with a guy rope attached to a peg to keep each in position. They stood a blanket length apart and two blankets were tied to the top of them by their corners, the other corners being pegged down to the ground, thus forming a shelter open at each end, and capable of holding two or three men and their not very numerous belongings. A little study enabled the architects to combine the maximum of shade with the maximum of wind ventilation. Save for a short period at *Romani* and then at *el Arish*, when the tents were brought up, these makeshift shelters were our homes until proper bivouac sheets and poles were issued in June 1917. They had to come down every night when the blanket was required for covering, and so we slept beneath the stars. This form of habitation led to a tremendous demand for bits of string—especially for little bits which attached the blankets to the poles or to the pegs. It was so easy, when dismantling a bivouac at night, to lay a bit of string on the ground, where it was swiftly and inevitably covered with sand and lost for ever. In consequence the careless or stringless took to sticking the peg



through a hole in the blanket and then to making a hole to stick the peg through and "this thing became a sin in Israel."

Some distance outside the camp we dug a series of little trenches for pickets which were occupied at night by companies in rotation. Stand-to for everyone was at 3.45 and was often prolonged by mist. But our only enemies were usually ineffective bombing planes and exceedingly effective swarms of flies and also little whirlwinds which rushed across the camp amid howls of execration and collapsing bivouacs. There were many chameleons about and they were in that state of disordered fancy which is supposed to attack the young man in the spring. We would capture them and, after emblazoning our names and numbers in indelible pencil on their flanks, an indignity which completely ruined their carefully worked out camouflage schemes, would set them to fight, which they did with extreme ferocity and remarkably little effect, nature having provided them with no weapon of offence whatever. The contest was chiefly one of swelling up and making faces, and was extremely exhilarating to the onlookers. Our only other diversion was the not always popular one of battalion exercises in various stages of the attack. Few attacks, alas, ever planned out exactly like that when there was a real enemy, but the exercises kept us fit and thirsty.

Our stay at Rabah lasted until September 11th, when we marched due west and took over a camp from the 4th R.S.F. north of Romani and close to the great landmark Katib Gannit. This was a vast pile of sand, its top 240 feet above sea level and rising a good 150 feet at a wonderfully steep angle from the minor sand dunes around it. It was visible for many miles to eastward, and had been used as an observation post in August and consequently heavily shelled. Our camp was in among the sand hills, which are unrelieved by scrub and of an almost incredible yellowness. "B "



SHEIKH'S TOMB, KATIA.



Company took over Redoubt No. 2, one of the chain with which we had already become familiar at the northern extremity. The rest of the Battalion were employed in training and route marching, while ranges were established for rifle and Lewis guns. Parties of officers and men were now allowed to go to Port Said for three days' leave, a privilege of which we were glad to avail ourselves. Port Said has few attractions, but hard roads and iced drinks are a great lure after months in the desert. The journeys to and fro were naturally not devoid of incident. The leave parties marched up to Mahamdiya in the early morning, over some miles of bad going, and Headquarters are to be congratulated on the fact that no party of ours at any rate ever left on an empty stomach. At Mahamdiya they reported to the R.T.O., a versatile officer of the 5th, whose administrative career was almost cut short by an untoward incident about this time. A great one, owning a private trolley for railway "scooting," 'phoned the R.T.O. office, Mahamdiya, to enquire whether the line from that place to Romani was clear. He received an answer in the affirmative and set off gaily. At about the same moment a large ration train left Romani for Mahamdiya. They met about half-way, and the engine driver, whose career had not taught him a proper reverence for red tabs, blew his whistle and carried on. The super-human agility of the trolley's crew just succeeded in getting their vehicle off the line before the train reached it, but the R.T.O.'s office at Mahamdiya stank in official nostrils for many days.

The line to Port Said, however, was a metre gauge one, laid down on the beach which runs as a narrow strip between the sea and the lagoons. The aforesaid R.T.O., sitting equably among a cloud of flies, would inform you on arrival (1) that the train which should have been the 8.30 from Mahamdiya had only just left Port Said, and could not arrive here for three hours, (2) that it had not run at all the



day before, owing to engine trouble, and (3) that the sea washed away parts of the line most days. He would then propose a second breakfast. About 12 the train would arrive and the party be packed like herrings in the narrow trucks. At 1.30 the one person who really ran the line—the engine driver—would have finished his lunch, and would proceed to refresh his iron steed by the simple expedient of pouring in water from a canvas bucket. Now comes the great moment—will she start or won't she? There is a puffing, a snorting, a few wild jerks, and then amid a tremendous scene of enthusiasm the 8.30 moves slowly off.

“Six an hour from 'ome an' duty !<sup>1</sup>  
Keep it up till we arrive.”

And we would go

“Bumping round the Bay of Tina  
Cocked up on a truss of hay.”

But the author of this poem was a gunner—the infantry did without the hay. On the right lies the deep blue of the Mediterranean, its waves often washing the track. On the left the light blue of the lakes stretched away till it mingled with the blue of the sky, and no man could say where water ended and sky began. Occasionally there would be islets, dark blots apparently hanging in the air, or a flock of far-off marsh birds, with legs amazingly lengthened and distorted by the mirage. Port Said would be reached about 3.30—and then the Canal had to be crossed. The return journey would probably be worse. One returning party paraded in good time for the 5 a.m. at Port Said. They left at midday, but on reaching the only siding on the line, about half-way to their destination, they found the up-train stranded with the engine broken down. Their engine therefore deserted them and hauled the derelict train into Port Said where the drinks are. They themselves reached camp

<sup>1</sup> *Songs on Service*.—Crawsley Williams.

between eight and nine at night. So the journey cut rather badly into the three days' leave. Officers who were free to do so would return by the Egyptian State Railway west of the Canal, as far as Kantara, and then go up by the desert line to Romani, perched on a truck of tibbin—a bumpy and smutty ride. It was no uncommon thing, especially at night, for the trains to break in two, as the suddenly varying gradients among the sand hills put a tremendous strain on the couplings, and one would be left stranded in the desert until the forward half reached a station, where some one might notice that it seemed unusually short. Those who only knew the line when officers could sleep in a cushioned sleeping car, and be whirled from the Gaza railhead at Deir el Belah to Kantara in eight or ten hours, have no idea what the line was capable of in its palmy days, when passenger traffic was not its forte—of the hopeless efforts to find out where any train or any truck was going to, and when it would go there; the long halts and sudden unheralded departures, at the moment when the passengers had at last dared to get out to stretch their legs; the rending struggles to board mountainous trucks piled high with rations; the starving quest for biscuits in forgotten canteens at stations where no one ever lived. Let us try and remember these things when next we are abusing the obscurities of Bradshaw or find our train five minutes late.

About this time our Brigade commander, Brigadier General Casson, who had been with us since the early days in Gallipoli, left us, to our great regret. He was succeeded by Brigadier General Hamilton Moore.

## CHAPTER VIII

### ACROSS THE SINAI DESERT TO EL ARISH.

Who can the desert's strength subdue ?  
Pipe, Rail and Road.  
Pipe to carry your drink to you ;  
Rail to speed your rations through ;  
Road to march on firm and true  
Past bir and hod.

So our gunner-poet—and in the main he speaks truth. But the “ Road firm and true ! ” at any rate lived only in his imagination. One does not think that any infantryman would have written that line. Such as ride upon horses can afford imagination. If you walk you come down to facts.

The second stage of our Crusade began on October 12th, when the Battalion marched away from Katib Gannit, this time carrying packs. Officers were allowed 30 lb. valises. And in general our possessions were boiled down and the necessities of life became barer than ever. The first march, an easy one, was to Rabah, and was over by midday—the Battalion furnishing pickets for that night. At 6.30 the next morning we moved off again, reaching Atchan at 11, where a halt was made and tea issued. Off again at 1.15, we reached Abu Afein in a couple of hours, having covered twelve miles of heavy going with the “ loss ” of eighteen men, of whom ten had heat exhaustion and three colic. On the 14th we reached Bir el Abd.

We have inserted a large number of place names in this narrative, not because the names are famous or to be found in



BIVOUACS, EL RABAH.





any but a very large scale map, nor because there was even anything at these places to justify their having names at all, but because each little group of cacophonous Arabic words will call up to those who were with us memories and mental pictures of incidents and scenes, otherwise forgotten. Beduin place names too have a charm of their own. Hod um Ugba for instance—officially translated as “the depression in the sand full of palm trees of Mother Ugba.” When we visited it, it was almost equally full of dead horses. It was pathetic to think of old Mother Ugba squatting in a concentration camp on the Canal and dreaming of the obscure charms of her beloved hod! One hopes she is back in it by now with Fathers Hamra and Jeheira and the rest, and we at any rate will never disturb them more. Or was Mother Ugba some mythical heroine of those great days when the armies of Egypt and of Asia moved through the desert to fight and plunder—and the Beduin hung on their flanks and cut up the wounded on either side indiscriminately, just as they do now. Or did she lead her tribe in the host of Saladin against the Crusaders and let the Saracens down as treacherously as she ambushed the Christians. Old de Joinville in his thirteenth century *Chronicle of the Crusades* has much to say of the Beduin. “Their belief is,” he tells us, “that no man can die save on the day appointed and for this reason they will not wear armour.” Recalling Palestine in the summer one can think of other very good reasons for not wearing armour! Their place names do not seem to have had much attraction for the Crusading chronicler, but perhaps he felt rather doubtful of the spelling and he had no ordnance survey map to guide him.

Bir el Abd was much the same as any other bit of desert, save that the higher sand hills were lacking, the country consisting of rolling slopes of no great elevation well spotted with scrub. It boasted a fine breed of chameleon, and we also found a number of little tortoises, which were pressed

into the service to give a bit of sport ! Tortoise racing was a slow business, but eminently sporting, because the tortoise is so splendidly unreliable. On one occasion one of the competitors in a big sweepstake was discovered to consist of a shell only—the tortoise who had once dwelt therein having died and turned to dust. In consideration of this it was given a start of six inches, but long odds were offered against it. However, at the end of the time limit—eight minutes—no competitor had moved at all, so that the tortoiseless one was adjudged the winner amid great applause.

Soon after our arrival we took over from the 7th S.R. as a reserve battalion and on the 23rd we took over a section of the outpost line itself, Bir el Abd was now the most forward infantry post. It was half-way between Kantara and el Arish—so that the “spear head” of the offensive defensive was making good progress. It was defended by a great ring of outpost positions, each held by a platoon or so, usually with another platoon in support. Night after night we slept in clothes and boots, with our equipment on us, and woke at intervals to peer into the dark for an hour, or see that others peered—then two more hours’ sleep and another turn of duty—and so on till we were called for stand-to—variously at three, four, five or six a.m., as the season changed. Then we all stood ready, rifles loaded and bayonets fixed, denied cigarettes or conversation, lest our positions be given away to an approaching enemy, who would not naturally be familiar with them as he would in trench warfare, while the horizon in front of us grew lighter, till at last the desolate world revealed itself, empty as ever and, to the jaundiced eye of a fasting man, utterly abominable. And all the time the nearest Turk would be a camel outpost twenty miles away. Of course they might have come. When utterly fed up we would remind ourselves of the R.S.F. and the Turks who appeared before their pickets in a misty dawn in April. But to us they never did come. And the effort

to be always ready, with so little hope of ever having any reward, was a real test of discipline—continuing as it did month after month in a country where unrelieved monotony tempted us all to the slackness of utter boredom.

The men were extremely badly off for washing water, and dirty bodies and dirty clothes were neither pleasant nor healthy. But there was no help for it. Sometimes a prowling officer would discover a little used well in some hod within marching distance, where the well-guard—for in Sinai you do not leave wells unguarded for any chance comer to draw a bucket of precious water—was amenable to tactful suggestion, or to which the Brigade could give us the entrée by some mystic chit. Then we would go forth with our kits and letting down biscuit tins would draw up a supply of the brackish fluid, which we would pour into little holes dug in the sand and covered with a waterproof sheet. Then a leisurely undressing and a hopeless effort to soap oneself—soap will not lather in brackish water—and a delicious coolness as a comrade poured a tinful down one's back. Under garments would be rinsed and beaten out, and the party would hasten back to the bivouac, and let someone else have a go. But there were long periods when a man could do no more than save a canteen lid full from his water bottle to get a shave, and there is no doubt that the lack of washing water aggravated the septic sores which afflicted the great majority. Wherever the skin was exposed on face, hands, arms and knees, any little cut or abrasion would fester till a big and painful sore had risen from the tiniest scratch. And with many men, however carefully they were dressed and bandaged to exclude the flies, they would not heal—or if they did another crop sprang up to take their places. It was a real hardship to have to dig with hands thus marked, but one that the men put up with with surprising cheerfulness. In fact, however septic, dirty, dull, hot or tired they might be, they never failed to find



something to laugh at, something to argue over, and something to hope for.

On the 27th of October the Brigade moved forward again to Salmana, just south of the great flat expanse of the dried up Lake Bardawil. Four hours' heavy marching brought each company to its position in a new outpost line, and we proceeded to dig positions with such effect that by nightfall 500 yards of trench were ready for occupation. Barbed wire and extra tools were brought up from Bardawil station by tired camels, and tired camels are if possible more exasperating than fresh camels, especially to tired men. On the 29th the Commander-in-Chief rode round our new line, which was by this time in good order, and the spear-head had again been pushed a mile or two nearer the Promised Land. It was at Salmana we received instructions issued by G.H.Q. and carefully passed on to battalions by the intermediate staffs to report immediately all submarines observed, stating time and direction proceeding. This put us on our mettle and the desert was carefully watched without success on our part, but a neighbouring unit was able to report a submarine moving north across Sabkhet Bardawil. The information was acknowledged with thanks and it was then stated we could relax our vigilance as the message was only for troops on the sea-coast.

On the 3rd of November the first heavy storm descended on us, sheets of rain with thunder and lightning. The only protection against this new, but henceforward all too common form of Sinaitic frightfulness, was the blanket bivouac, and a blanket thoroughly soaked by the deluge was a poor covering for the now chilly nights. Fortunately the storms were usually succeeded by sunshine, and if they came in the earlier part of the day there was a chance of things being dried again before dusk. If they came at night you could always look forward to the day.

The Battalion remained in the Salmana area, with several

changes of camp, until November 21st, when it returned to el Abd with the 7th H.L.I. to take over the defences of that place, by now a railway depot of some importance. Local defences of all important points along the railway had always to be carefully maintained. There would be plenty of warning of a strong attack from the east as there had been in August. But a raid by men mounted on camels might have come unheralded from the south, and had such a raid succeeded in cutting the line, burning the stores, and wasting the water, say at el Abd, the British advance would have been greatly retarded. We therefore continued our nocturnal vigils on the ridges which encircled the station. The nights were now extremely chilly, but the flies had not yet succumbed. They swarmed everywhere, and the discovery of a dead camel an inch or two under the sand in "A" Company's bivouac area rejoiced their pestilential hearts. It is the immemorial custom of the desert not to bury dead camels or horses but to let them lie. Then you know where you are and the sun soon cooks the carcasses till they become inoffensive. This is, however, repugnant to the tidy minds of European sanitary experts, who give orders for the burial of the deceased. The wiser Egyptian is overruled and has to do the burying. Now it takes a simply monstrous hole to hold a camel, and the result of the clash of English and Egyptian ideas is a very imperfectly buried carcase, just covered from the beneficent influence of the sun, but filling the surrounding air with its disgusting aroma.

It was during this second stay at Bir el Abd that the Bint joined us—rescued for fifty piastres from the unworthy hands of a Port Said native by Lieut. Agnew. It was always a matter of surprise to the present writer that so many failed to pierce the bizarre exterior of this amiable ape and to reach to the warm heart and sweet temper within. Perhaps a certain savagery of attack and brutality in the use of the teeth misled them. But what affectionate solicitude would

she display as she minutely examined every inch of a human friend in an effort to exterminate those little typhoid carriers. What courage when she entered the tent of a General at el Arish and helped herself to a drink from the great one's basin. With what élan did she consequently rout a scandalised A.D.C. and with what skill, giving ground before reinforcements from the staff, did she fly up the biggest palm tree in the sacred enclosure. With what fortitude did she share our hard times when water was scarce or rations late. How sweetly, in a French billet, did she accept the offerings of the children—and how natural her ferocious attack on these same children after she had been extremely sick as a result of a mixed diet of chocolate and cherries to which they had tempted her. And did she not suffer indignities enough to sour the sweetest disposition. Think of being tied to the saddle of a huge and smelly camel, whose gait made her sea-sick, for a long day's marching. No wonder her piteous screams rent the air. And then when someone had loosed her from this uncomfortable eminence—think how cruel it must have seemed to her that friend after friend, sweating along in the sand, should repulse with evil words her amiable desire to add herself to the weight of pack and equipment for a ride on his shoulder, till she was forced to give in and hop along “on her own steam” in the hot dust. She did not always remain a front line monkey, but with the transport she went through all the fighting in Palestine and then accompanied the Battalion to France. At last, bereft successively by the chances of war of all her best friends, she somehow drifted to Glasgow and is now believed to be living in a travelling menagerie. We can only hope that she wears the war medal she has earned and is treated with proper respect, and we are confident that she still lives up to her great motto—*Nemo me impune lacessit*.

All this time there was no drain of casualties, and remarkably little sickness. Inoculations were frequent and to



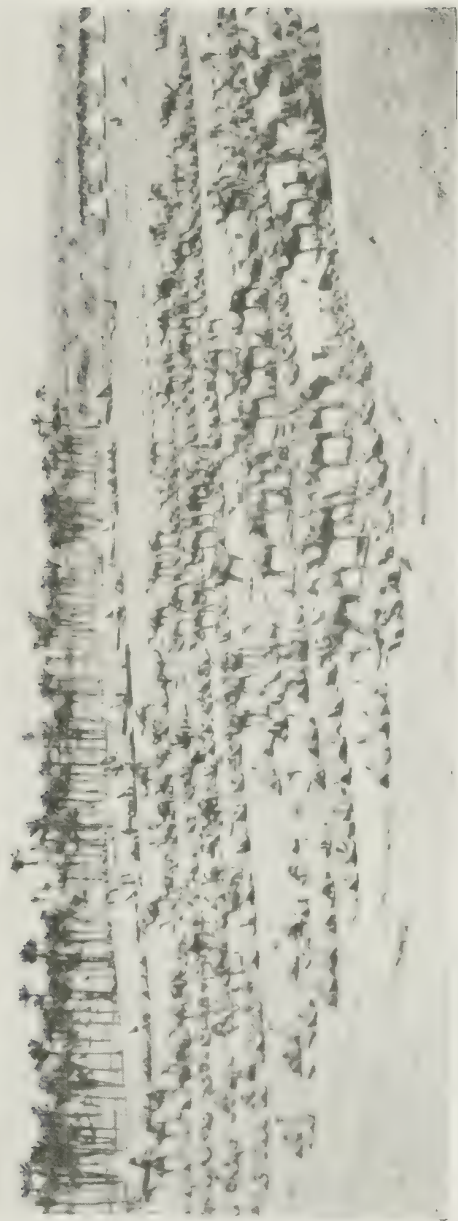
judge by results very successful. Cholera inoculation was the mildest, typhoid or paratyphoid sometimes gave sore arms and headaches, tetanus only the wounded received and it was far the worst of the lot, but any one who has seen a man die of tetanus is not likely to complain. On an inoculation day the doctor had his chance, and we tried to establish cordial relations with the medical department as soon as orders for the *débacle* appeared. The ceremony was always the same. The men were paraded by companies with their pay books, and shepherded into alphabetical order. Officers went first, in order, as they thought, to set the men a good example, and as the men thought, not to have to stand waiting in the sun. At the tent door—for a tent was usually borrowed from somewhere to give decency and privacy to the rites—an acolyte dabbed a large yellow patch of iodine on the victim's arm. Moving into the superheated shrine, he assisted Sergt. Lyon to tick off his name on the nominal roll, and then approached the M.O. Some doctors were bland and cheerful, others humorous, others strictly businesslike, but they all knew that this was their chance to pay off old scores. By using the sharp needle or the blunt one, and varying the angle of the stick in, they could adapt their onslaught to their personal opinion of the victim, and as a final insult in very bad cases, could observe as they pushed it home, "What a thick skin you have got."

Constant small drafts had increased our strength and the Battalion numbered about 30 officers and 800 other ranks when it was relieved by part of the 54th Division and started on a further advance to the east. These perpetual moves were far more complicated than the ordinary shifts from reserve to trenches in France, where convenient dumps and exchanges of tools and ammunition with the relieved troops, greatly decreased the labour, while wheeled transport and motor lorries enabled one to retain many of the appliances of civilised life. The soldier on service, even in a



desert, has a wonderful way of acquiring possessions, and every time we moved we were faced with the total loss of our dearest treasures. A heavy parcel mail usually arrived the day before, and we had to overeat ourselves or dump. Each company mess cherished a few bits of straw matting and some poles, found or stolen, with which they rigged up a precarious shelter wherein to eat their meals, sitting in state on sand-bag seats at a table of sand covered with a waterproof sheet. Must these be abandoned and the bereaved officers feed in the open? A thousand times no. But there were no extra camels—the company camel would already be over-weighted by the mess box and X.'s valise—with its extra blanket and extravagant underclothing. Great would be the searchings of heart. Still everything always came right in the end—the Brigade sent us some “buckshee” camels at the eleventh hour, or at worst we got permission to send some stuff by train, when it could be delivered in due course somewhere within reach. Something always did have to go by train anyway, for we had now a second blanket per man, and there were not enough camels to carry these, so that round about a move the men had a succession of cold nights, after the second blanket had gone on, before it could be brought up to the new area.

Long before dawn on a “mobile” day we would rise in the chilly dark—it was still worse if we were on outpost to boot—and raucous voices would be heard bidding “No. 3 Platoon, hurry up with those blankets,” or “No. 12, fall in for water issue.” The blankets carried by camels had to be rolled lengthways in bundles of ten, and the rolls were then tied on to the camel saddle, where the outer ones brushed the flanks of that smelly and freely perspiring creature. Breakfast would be issued—a half canteen of tea and a bit of ham, taken delicately from the fingers of the orderly man, as he fished it out from the dixie lid—a small enough bit



CAMEL LINES, EL ARISH.



it was, too, most mornings. One orderly officer still remembers the impassioned complaint of a hungry soldier who "wouldn't insult his youngest child by offering it a meal of that size." And how these wonderful people, the orderly men, ever managed to divide up their meagre supply to a ravening company before daylight, when half the men were engaged on various fatigues—no one but themselves can tell. Then a hasty loading of camels, and putting on of equipment, and we would fall in as the day began to break. Company parade and a wait, a move to battalion parade and a wait, then to Brigade rendezvous if the whole Brigade were on the move, and another wait, till the pack seemed dragging at the shoulders like a living thing before the regularly divided hours of march and halt began. The sun came up and it grew hot, and at a convenient halt the men would remove the cardigan they had put on in the shivery hours of darkness. Hotter and hotter but not so thirsty these days, for we were more acclimatised and this was winter. At last a call for company commanders and they would ride forward to get the bivouac areas allotted to them—for these things were arranged beforehand now—we did not sit and grill in the sun while the Staff dealt with the question. On arrival platoon commanders got their areas from the company commander, and explained to their men that they might bivouac "between that clump of scrub and that mound." Arms piled, equipment taken off, a rush for the most desirable sites, fatigue parties detailed to unload, and the cooks set to work to produce tea or heat the Maconochies. Hard words over a missing roll of blankets, bitter complaints at the loss of someone's bivouac pole, arguments between the loading party and the escort who "had had to reload six camels by the way," a little digging of trenches for the night outposts—and so ends another dull day with the same business often to be repeated on the morrow.



On December 4th we moved forward again to Salmana, three days later to Abu Tilul, and the next day to Bir el Mazar, twenty-five miles west of el Arish. Part of these mobiles lay over Sabkhet, where it was possible to keep step and the pipers attached to each company could amaze the desert rats with alien music. The hard work fell on the flank guards, who had to move over heavy sand and to keep up with the column rejoicing in the better going, and putting on the pace accordingly. The sun at this time of the year was not so fierce that balmorals could not be worn with safety all day, but sun helmets were still retained, and had to be worn whenever we moved, there being no other way of carrying them. We were allowed a good deal of latitude in the matter of the tunic and a man might choose whether he would increase the warmth of his body by wearing it, or the load on his back by putting it in his pack. Water sterilisers were part of each man's kit—in order that in the event of his having to drink unauthorised well water he should be able to kill off some of the more ferocious bacilli likely to be found therein. They were contained in glass bottles, which were easily broken in the pack, and the little tablets, especially when damp, showed the most extraordinary power of eating holes in the kit, and even of making their way through the pack itself, till it looked as if it had been partially burnt. As damaged articles could not be quickly replaced, a ragged pack often added to the bizarre aspect of the British soldier, with his dew-whitened helmet, squashed out of all decent shape, shirt of varied hue rolled back from sunburnt chest and arms usually marked by a dirty white bandage or two, drill shorts stained, blackened and often torn, bare knees, puttees and rather disreputable boots. It is said that General Allenby when he took over the E.E.F. was much shocked at the sartorial appearance of the infantry. We must indeed have afforded a sad contrast to the cavalry in France, but the condi-

tions of life certainly did not lend themselves to spit and polish.

Of El Mazar there is little to record. The country was getting more and more hilly, the sand ridges running roughly parallel N.W. to S.E. On the western side they presented long gentle slopes, very trying to scale, while on the eastern they fell sharply into the succeeding valley, so that the well-earned down hill was over in a minute of scrambling over the boot tops in a cascade of sand. Camels could only take these steep slopes at an angle, and it was often very difficult to get them and the Lewis gun pack mules along. The night we arrived at Mazar was memorable on account of our divisional pipe band and the band of the 42nd Division both playing at the same time during mess at their respective headquarters which were a very short distance apart and both only about a mile in rear of the outpost line. A few nights previous Brigade Headquarters issued an order that all nocturnal noises must be immediately reported and steps taken to stop such noise. This probably referred to the camel drivers who had a habit of singing native chants far into the night and consequently disturbed the rest of those who wished to sleep. However, this opportunity could not be missed. The C.O. drafted a message which was at once signalled to Brigade Headquarters as follows: "Listening Post reports nocturnal noises vicinity of Division Headquarters. What action is to be taken?" The Brigade reply which arrived a few minutes later was very brief and pointed; it ran, "Put the cork in the bottle."

All thought now centred on the taking of el Arish, some twenty-five miles further east, and well protected by Turkish trenches cleverly revetted with scrub, and dress rehearsals were held in which the whole force took part, and which meant a good deal of heavy marching. Between Mazar and el Arish lay a big belt of country where water could not be obtained even by well digging, so that not only men but

camels and horses had to be watered from supplies brought up by rail and stored in great canvas covered tanks. The provision of a sufficient quantity to supply the force for a number of days was thus the condition of a successful advance. On December 16th we moved forward to el Maadan, Kilo 128 on the railway, a march of twelve miles, which owing to the difficult country Colonel Morrison noted as "probably the most fatiguing the Battalion has yet undertaken." Here the outpost line was held by the 42nd Division and we were engaged on digging and road making. The latter operation consisted in cutting scrub and flattening out a track at a reasonable gradient. On this long rows of ordinary rabbit wire netting were pegged down four abreast and the result was a "road" which very greatly increased the pace and extent of infantry marching. The wire prevented a man from sinking into the sand and was comfortable enough to walk on, if one was careful not to catch one's toes. Unfortunately these roads followed and did not precede the force, and the 52nd Division usually formed the leading infantry, with the result that the Battalion never had the advantage of them for a "mobile" until after el Arish was passed, and then only for a few miles.

On December 20th we moved to Kilo 129 and took over a bit of the outpost line from the 6th Manchesters and that evening we occupied the trenches in orderly silence as usual. Sentry groups were put out, rifles loaded and all hope of a smoke put away till the dawn. As darkness fell, however, there appeared from the westward a great cloud of dust and columns of mounted men, and Horse Artillery, their gun-wheels broadened with pedrails, moved through our line and proceeded to camp immediately in front of our silent and alert sentries. They off-saddled and huge fires sprang up like magic, great columns of tired horses moved backwards and forwards to water, and the air was filled with the cheerful din of Australian talk and song. Rumours had been floating



about all day that the Turks were evacuating and the sudden arrival of the cavalry left little doubt as to their truth. The pressing problem for the officer was how to explain to his scandalised men that the Anzacs were not violating all the rules of properly conducted warfare. This was done by postulating far flung cavalry outposts in the dim distance. One has often wondered whether they existed except in our imaginations ; but the Anzac likes to conduct war in his own way, and if somewhat casual about details, many a Turk will witness that he has a firm grasp on the essentials. We felt justified in relaxing somewhat our usual vigilance and spent a peaceful night. Long before dawn, however, the cavalry had moved off with uncanny speed and quietness, and surrounded el Arish before daylight, after a brilliant ride over unknown, unmapped, and very difficult country in the dark. Within the next few days they attacked the Turks at Maghdaba and Rafa—each thirty miles from el Arish—inflicting heavy defeats and capturing many prisoners in each case. The story of all this has been well told by Mr. Massy in *The Desert Campaigns*. But the unhappy infantry had of necessity to be left out.

One great service the cavalry invasion did render us. The Australian light horseman has the bump of acquisitiveness even better developed than the Lowland infantryman, and having a horse on which he can hang his trophies he can give this penchant greater scope. But when he is going into action—or believes himself to be—he unhesitatingly sacrifices all that will incommode him in the serious business of war. In consequence the ground recently vacated appeared at dawn to our astonished eyes covered with a litter of discarded possessions. When *we* moved camp it was our honourable custom to pick up and burn or bury every tin, every fragment of paper and every match and cigarette end and to leave the desert swept and garnished as we found it—or better. So our first thought was one of scandalised



amazement at the extreme untidiness of the business. Our next was less disinterested. We were on mobile rations, bully, biscuit, milk and jam. Vegetables and the "wee piece ham" had disappeared. Surely Australians did not live like that. Nor were we disappointed. Foraging parties returned laden with sides of bacon, cheese, bread, Maconochies, sacks of onions and dessicated vegetables, enough to make us quite certain of a full meal on Christmas Day, so long as we did not move in the interval. Nor was this all. Folding benches and tables, matting and bivouac poles, frying pans and canvas buckets, books and tobacco, a watch and even a real live horse were discovered—all the things which stand for wealth among such a primitive tribe as we then were. It is rumoured that hot and blasphemous Australian Quartermaster-Sergeants rode back that evening to retrieve some of their property. Well, they did not find it all. People who like bacon shouldn't leave it lying in deserts in front of hungry Scotchmen.

Our own orders to advance were cancelled, and we stopped on at Maadan. The evacuation of el Arish was rather an anti-climax. No one wants another war, and it would not be honest to pretend that we were all fire-eaters living for nothing but the joy of a scrap. At the same time a life of dreary monotony on a dead land becomes more endurable when there is the hope of coming excitement and the spur to effort of a definite place to be won. And when a man is keyed up to the idea of a fight, life seems dull and flat if he is suddenly told that it will not come off.

The weather, however, did its best to give us something to think about. It rained most nights, with thunder and lightning accompaniments, and the damp and dismal hours of darkness seemed endless in the exposed picquets. Save for the Australian loot it looked like a fasting Christmas. Parcel mails could not be sent up, for every camel was required to convey food and fodder on to the cavalry. The

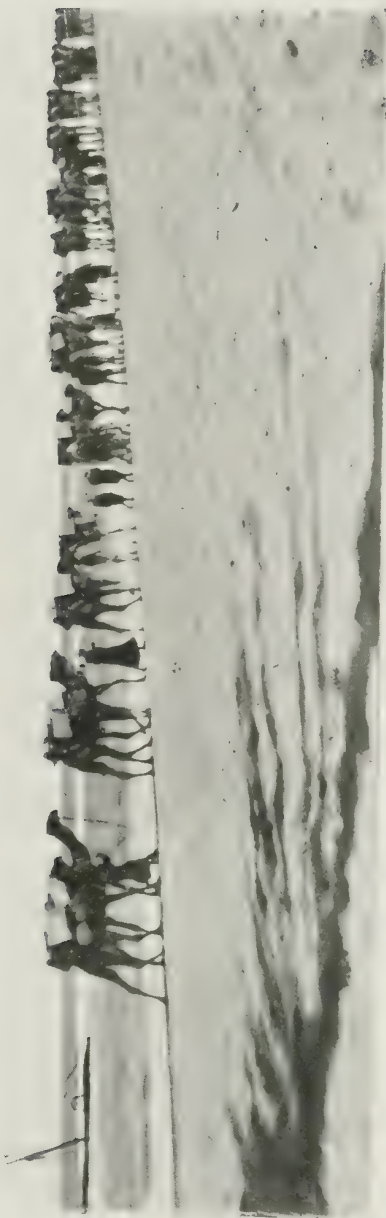
cigarette ration was behindhand and most of the men were without a smoke. The officers could torture themselves with the thought of five turkeys ordered in Port Said and unlimited mess stores lying sixty miles away at Romani. But at the last moment all was changed. A parcel mail came in—and the spectre of bully unrelieved vanished—the five turkeys, personally conducted by a versatile officer's servant, made their appearance—together with sufficient *Daily Telegraph* plum puddings for every one to get a piece, and last but not least, a determined Brigadier held up a ration convoy, and refused to let it through until he obtained enough cigarettes for a small issue to the Brigade. This action increased the sympathy which all felt for a tragedy which afflicted Brigade Headquarters at this time. Their live turkey shepherded up the line with extreme difficulty, suddenly, though perhaps not unjustifiably, died before any one had time to kill it. Captain Kennedy was immediately summoned to conduct a post mortem and had regretfully to decide that it was not fit for human consumption, adding however that if it were sent up to our headquarters they would make quite sure.

So there was some attempt at Christmas cheer in the holes in the sand into which the weather had driven us, for we who had once set our bivouacs to catch every breath of wind, now dug ourselves down three or four feet to avoid the sand-laden and icy blast. (We were thus also admirably protected against the bombing raids of the Turk's aeroplanes.) The three outpost companies had their vigil cheered by the distant drums and fifes of an English battalion playing "While shepherds watched their flocks by night—all seated on the ground," and felt a new and poignant sympathy with those whose watch must have been so like our own.

The great spell of Christmas seemed even to have touched the hearts of G.H.Q. for on Christmas Eve the C.O. received

a wire through Brigade to ask "How many of your officers have wives in Egypt?" He was compelled to reply that no officer had managed the feat suggested. But it is nice to speculate on how the staff in Cairo, who doubtless had, felt their hearts go out to their less fortunate brethren of the fighting forces and how they hatched a plan for special private wires from wife to husband at this season of goodwill. Let no cynic obtrude other motives for that famous telegram.

On December 29th we moved forward again to Kilo 139, near Abu Felcifil. We left behind us Captain Wightman as Post Commandant at Kilo 128, a position which he held with true Scottish tenacity long after the whole post had melted away, and he had no one to command except his batman, another of the same bull-dog breed. He only admitted defeat when the last of the water in the canvas tanks was consumed, and the passing ration train had given up leaving anything for him to eat, and steamed past the forgotten post with a derisive whistle. At 139 we enjoyed heavy rain storms, bleak cold days, and a tearing wind; which raised a sand-storm as soon as the rain had sunk in. We were, however, free of outpost duty on the 31st and able to take off our boots at night for the first time for a fortnight, and a surprising number of us were able to celebrate the new year with a nip of something better than chlorinated water. On the 5th we took the outpost line again, but in the interval we did several route marches and saw the excellent Turkish trenches at Masaid among palm trees, growing scattered over a wide area, quite unlike the little concentrated hods with which we were familiar. We were now only a mile or two from the sea, and the roar of the surf reached us day and night, but bathing had lost much of its attraction with the change of weather and was even rather dangerous. On one day the sand-storm was so bad that it was impossible to leave camp. Anything left in the open was rapidly buried, and



BAGGAGE CAMELS ON SHORE NEAR EL ARISH.





our food and drink, our ears and eyes and mouths were kept full of grit for twenty-four hours.

On January 8th we were off again and moving down to the coast, marched on to el Arish. The going was naturally very heavy, but we thus avoided the almost impassable jumble of high sand-dunes inland. On that day the Anzac cavalry passed us on their way to fight at Rafa, riding down the beach in long lines, and making a very impressive sight. The effect was rather spoilt by the inconsiderate attentions of some Turkish planes but no harm was done. We reached our bivouac area south of el Arish about two. It is a curious commentary on the complaints of the cold that we have just voiced, that the men of a new draft reached el Arish, running with sweat and vowing they had never been so hot in their lives, in spite of being in shirt sleeves, while the rest of us wore our tunics, and were hardly even thirsty.

## CHAPTER IX

### EL ARISH AND FIRST BATTLE OF GAZA.

EL ARISH, the ancient Rhinocolura, lies near the mouth of the Wadi el Arish, which runs away southward into the heart of Sinai and is believed to have been the River of Egypt, the southern boundary of Biblical Palestine. The wadi hardly deserved the name of river to-day, but during the winter months it is sometimes covered with water to the depth of a few inches, flowing slowly down to the sea. Along its banks the inhabitants plant their crops among the palm trees, watering them assiduously from wells, with the assistance of tiny donkeys, about the size of goats, each carrying two enormous water jars. The town is the capital of the Mudirieh of Sinai, and boasted a British resident and a force of Beduin police, but was abandoned with the rest of the province when Turkey declared war. The country round the town is almost completely bare of scrub, a mass of tumbled hills of sand, rounded slopes and razor-like crests, alternating with deep valley between almost sheer cliffs. Here and there are palm or other evergreen trees, and in the low ground round the wadi are numerous fig trees.

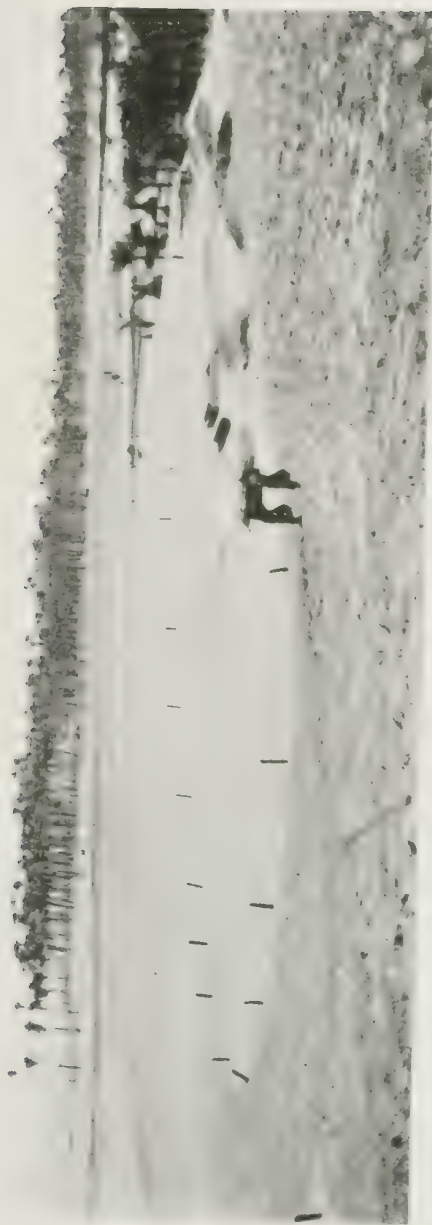
The town itself was a disappointment to the men, who could not but expect some of the amenities of civilisation in a place of whose military importance they had heard so much. At the western end was an ancient fort, now in ruins from a bombardment by our monitors, one or two more pretentious houses with plaster fronts, and the mosque

whose white minaret, though not of any great height, we had seen through a gap in the sand hills from many miles to westward. But most of the buildings were single-roomed, flat-roofed huts, with tiny slits for windows. The troops were not allowed into the town but a glimpse could be obtained from without of the few streets, paved only with the desert sand. From a little distance, however, el Arish was surprisingly beautiful. It matched exactly with the grey yellow of the sand, which swept up to it and rose behind it unrelieved by the distraction of scrub, while the white dome of a little tomb, the faded plaster of the mosque and the occasional dark green of a low tree among the buildings, gave just the right contrast in colour. Seen in the clear light of dawn, or in the evening glow, it had a haunting beauty which all who knew it will remember.

The inhabitants were a picturesque set of villains ; dressed in their flowing robes surmounted by ancient goat skins, and with a dark fillet round their head-dresses, they brought back to one memories of old Bible pictures—and there was hardly one of the men whose bearded features would not have made a splendid model for a picture of Judas Iscariot. The women were usually veiled, and those of them at any rate who were allowed outside the walls presented no very startling attractions. But the old crones who came down to draw water at the wells would burst into scandalised but very human cackles of merriment, when the gallant Lowlander on well-guard filled their water jars with a cheerful “Saida bint”—“Good day, maiden.” A knowledge of Arabic by the way was an acquisition on which every man prided himself ; and the writer lost much ground in the estimation of his batman for his refusal to arrest a wandering member of the Egyptian Labour Corps, whom that zealous youth asserted to be a German spy, “because he could not understand Egyptian.” The el Arish children were as friendly and talkative as children all the world over, though



one regretted their inveterate habit of demanding back-sheesh. The fair hair of some of them led our historians to daring theories about French great-grandfathers who had tarried and wooed while on Napoleon's lightning expedition. For the information of future travellers it is only fair to state that there will be no Scotch ancestors. It was a real pleasure to see human beings living their ordinary lives, catching fish and watering crops in unmilitary and restful unconcern. We lay in the el Arish area for a couple of months, with changes of camp every week or so, and we learnt afterwards that this was a period of special training to fit us for the fighting which was expected in Palestine. It must be admitted that we had not recognised it as such at the time, Outposts, guards and fatigues of every kind did not seem to leave us overmuch time for training. Still we did manage to fit in a good deal of work with the smaller formations. and one or two days of Brigade and Divisional training to boot. Two night operations—yes, we will say it now—a most detestable form of exercise, linger specially in the memory. Night work in this sort of country is always difficult because there are so few landmarks. A Brigade can be moved on a compass bearing with every chance of success if the mover has the necessary elementary knowledge. But the commander of a smaller unit, say a platoon, going to or returning from a certain place in the dark, rarely has any knowledge of the right bearing to work on, and if the night is cloudy, he is surrounded by a Stygian darkness in which he soon feels a little doubtful of his uncharted way. He begins to zigzag a bit, peering through the gloom for some familiar land-mark. The men, who for the most part would be completely lost in three minutes on their own, are critical and unsympathetic, and rightly, for this is what an officer is paid extra for. They whisper caustic comments in the rear. All sense of direction seems suddenly to fail the unhappy man, and he sinks into the depths of a misery



MOUTH OF WADI EL ARISH.



which few others can equal. At last a light shines out ahead. Making towards it with a wild hope he sees the darker marks of bivouacs against the sand, and suddenly recognises his own company lines. With a heart full of thankfulness he halts and dismisses his men, and retires to his own hole fondly believing that no one but himself knows what had happened.

But in Brigade night operations platoon commanders and even company commanders and greater men still abandon themselves with the rest to an appalling nightmare of moving in sudden jerks through a gloom full of whispered oaths and the creaking of rifles and of ill-fitting equipment. There are long chilly halts, when the men rub their bare knees to keep them warm or drop into an uneasy doze—then sudden orders passed along in a hoarse undertone, and a frenzied effort to change formation and keep touch with the swaying line. And so it goes on hour after hour till at long last there is a spurt or two of fire and the crackling of blank, a lumbering charge, and then much gathering together of platoons and companies, and we have learnt our lesson and may go to bed.

On January 10th tents sufficient for half the battalion went sent up and pitched. They were a most welcome shelter from sand-storms and other rigours of the Sinai winter. The order to camouflage them caused some difficulty. A party went down to the wadi and with infinite labour brought up some semi-liquid mud in waterproof sheets, but it was impossible to secure enough in this way. Finally the work was done by mixing cocoa, which could not be used for its legitimate purpose owing to lack of fresh water, with sea water and daubing the tents with the product.

On the same day 900 men reported to the A.P.M. to escort the Turkish prisoners taken at Rafa down to Cairo. These numbered some 1400, including thirty Turkish officers, a German officer and some German gunners. The trip was a



strictly business one and no one had much chance of enjoying Cairo. The party returned on the 16th.

The broad, dry bed of the wadi gave a fairly hard surface and all the morning would be dotted with manoeuvring infantry and cavalry, while even guns and camelry were not uncommon. In the afternoon it was usual to find several games of football in progress. Ever since the worst heat of summer had departed, football had been played in the Battalion wherever a flat bit of Sabkhet could be found—while the men were always glad to kick a ball about even in the heavy sand. Now with better opportunities the Battalion played several matches, defeating among others a battalion of the 42nd Division, while company and platoon matches were common. The Brigade even produced a rugger side and played some strenuous games with Australians and others.

On the whole, most of us have pleasant memories of el Arish and its fig trees—on which, true to the traditions of extreme solicitude for other people's interest which distinguish the British army, we were not allowed to hang up our clothes to dry, for fear of breaking the branches—just as we might not cut down palm boughs for bivouac poles in forgotten desert hods for fear of injuring the trees. Our moves were frequent but we always found a proportion of tents, and after a wet night in the outpost line there would usually be enough sun to dry our clothes during the next day. Leave to Cairo brought a most welcome change to those fortunate enough to get it, while the remainder could console themselves with football and bathing, and the Brigade and Divisional "stunts" kept us fit and healthy. Those whose duty brought them into connection with the camels had their fill of excitement, and one still recalls a picture of an infuriated camel chasing all and sundry round the camp, with a fantassy on one side of its pack and a company storeman, who had mounted to preserve the

balance, uttering lamentable cries on the other. The arrival of the gippy driver and the complete fearlessness with which he seized the trailing rope and beat the furious beast into submission with a pole, gave a foretaste of the courage which some of these men showed under shell-fire in later days. By the 3rd of March, by the way, the thermometer had risen to above 80 inside the tents. While at el Arish, "Padre" Campbell, who had been with the Battalion since we left Leven, returned home to his parish, and his place was taken by "Padre" De la Bere. The 42nd Division left Sinai for France and there was a reorganisation of the Desert Column, which now included the 53rd Division, who passed through the 52nd Division at this time and were the leading infantry on the march towards the border. General Chetwode, who had arrived from France, took command of the Desert Column.

On the 7th of March we left our tents and moved eastwards again, having for some of the distance the great boon of the wire road which part of the Brigade had constructed. So unused were we to such firm going that some of us were afflicted with blisters and pains in the front of the calf; but this was a light price to pay. The pack drivers had to keep off the road with their animals, as had the camel escort, which was hard on them. Arrived at el Burj, we obtained permission to go for a bathe, and moved off by companies through enormous sand hills. However, before half the Battalion had been down, we were suddenly warned to take up an outpost line, although we had been previously informed that we should not be required to do so. The consequence was a long march carrying great-coats and blankets and a very difficult posting of picquets in the dark. Moreover, the dinner ration of fresh meat could not be cooked because the ration and water camels could not find us, and the men, who badly needed a meal, had to go hungry. It is rumoured that a Staff officer, not unconnected with the affair, who

visited us incognito, heard a lurid but truthful account of how the business struck us, from a chance met subaltern, who in the darkness had no idea that he was entertaining angels.

After a broken night's rest the Brigade moved on at dawn, the Battalion supplying the advance guard, and reaching its bivouac area at 1.15. The scenery as we advanced began to show a most welcome change. In the hollows by the side of the track little patches of dwarf barley appeared and a thin crop of green stuff began to transform the familiar sand. Our bivouac area was a valley which from a little distance looked almost like a meadow at home. On a nearer approach the vegetation was found to be very thin, and the soil still sandy, but it was spotted with delightful little flowers, and in the village of Sheikh Zowaid near by, were fruit trees and cactus hedged enclosures well covered with fresh grass ; while to the south of us were some big areas of young crops. The effect of this change was immediate, and the least poetical and imaginative among us felt a thrill of joy in the relief from the desolation of eternal sand. To the north a high barrier of sand hills hid the sea, a barrier which runs right along the coast as far as Jaffa and beyond. But in the distance it was beautiful enough, and served to remind us of what we had escaped.

Unfortunately the dust storms were even worse here than among the heavier sand and the place swarmed with centipedes, scorpions and other undesirables. But we were not in a mood to be critical when we retired to rest beneath the stars, with the fresh smell of living flowers in our nostrils, or woke at dawn to hear little crested larks do their best to imitate their brethren overseas, though they could but manage a few gentle notes and that from the ground.

An Australian trooper on arriving at a very attractive grass enclosure at Sheikh Zowaid found a notice to the effect that this area was reserved for the Headquarters of



BEDOUIN SHEIKHS, BELAH.





such and such a Division, obviously the work of a zealous A.D.C. His annoyance at not being able to secure this area for his own regiment's resting place made him add to the notice in large letters, "Please keep off the gwass."

On the 16th we took over an extended picket line in sandy country but overlooking a good deal of barley. While we were here the Desert Column Race Meeting was held at Rafa. Several of the Battalion horses were entered, and did not disgrace us, though we could hardly expect a win against the pick of the Anzac, Yeomanry, and Gunners' mounts. Several of the Battalion managed to be present at the meeting, which was a great success. Meanwhile rumours that something was going to happen kept coming in, and Colonel Morrison was away for several days reconnoitring the country to the east and north-east. All our surplus stores were dumped and a guard of the bootless left with them, and we moved off from Sheikh Zowaid on the morning of the 25th of March, reaching Rafa about midday. Here a halt was made, and tea was issued. At five o'clock the Division moved on and crossed the frontier into Asia as dusk was falling. It was rather an impressive moment and the pipers, rising to the occasion, played "Blue bonnets o'er the Border." Behind was the sunset in a sky of brilliant crimson. In front stretched great uplands of a dim green, while we, the new Crusaders, crossed over to the lilt of the pipes, whose music astonished Palestine now heard for the first time; and with us in great columns moved guns and cavalry, camels and transport, half seen in a haze of hanging dust. These of course are after thoughts, at the time one's point of view was rather different. One asked oneself whether two mobiles in one day was fair, one wondered where the devil we were going to, and one cursed the dust and the weight of one's pack. Suddenly we found ourselves moving between hedges up what might well have been a dusty country lane at home—for the kindly darkness hid

the unfamiliar leaves of the cactus which bordered it. Mysterious, silent figures loomed up on either side to watch us pass. Another mile and we turned through a gap and received orders to bivouac in a real field, and heard that we were at Khan Yunis—"John's Inn."

The spell of home was soon broken for those who were detailed to unload the camels. The drivers were tired and had "barracked" their charges in a careless mass instead of in proper lines. The camels were tired too, and a tired camel stretches its long neck down to the dust. Then comes an angry private and falls over the neck in the dark and camels and men hate each other, each giving audible expression to their emotions after their kind.

We waked at dawn on the 26th to the noise of heavy firing in the north, and found a green and pleasant world blanketed in mist. The 53rd and 54th Divisions, with the cavalry, were attacking Gaza and this mist, the despatches afterwards told us, just prevented their complete success. We passed an uneventful day—listening and wondering. Some of us made our way down into the village and examined the fruit trees and enclosures and the square huts of which it was composed. The features of the inhabitants inspired, if possible, even less confidence than those of the citizens of el Arish; but the men were dignified and aloof, and we remembered that we were now in Turkish territory.

In the evening we received sudden orders to be ready to move by 6.30 p.m. and at 6.15 we were told to get off at once. In consequence the camels and loading parties got a very bad start and the latter at any rate set off at a feverish double in an effort to find the remainder before it got too dark. They managed indeed to catch up, but their troubles were not over. The dust was appalling in the narrow lanes. The whole Battalion was moving in what was aptly described as "short sharp rushes" alternately with long periods of steady doubling, while the camels, who lose their heads as

soon as they are asked to increase their dignified rate of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles an hour, were floundering along at its side. Their loads, hastily packed and wildly hurled from side to side in their disastrous progress, again and again came sliding to the ground, to be painfully reloaded in the dark by furious escorts and despairing drivers. Sometimes the maddened beasts broke away and galloped off, shedding their precious burdens as they went, determined—as one of the men observed—“to finish this—mobile in clean fatigue.” The other half of our live stock, the pack mules, who are impervious to fear, but possessed of seventy devils of contrariance and misplaced humour, on the excuse of the near proximity of their *bête noire*, the camel, indulged in their most violent antics, kicked, jibbed or bolted, blocking the track and causing a halt which had to be followed by a wild sprint to regain touch. Frenzied messages to the front were met with sympathy, but the orders were to push on, and they could not lose touch with the 7th in front. Our progress could perhaps best be compared to a Marathon race in Hell.

At last, however, came a halt which enabled us to close up, and soon after we got into open country where there was less dust and the fresh smell of flowers and herbs revived us. At 1 a.m. we reached Inserrat and halted, receiving orders to lie down where we were, ready to move at a moment's notice. The ground was a ploughed field, very hard and lumpy, but we were soon asleep, save for those unfortunates who spent the remainder of the night searching for lost camels on which were all their household gods.

We were not allowed to sleep it off but had an early *réveillé* on the 27th and breakfasts were over soon after six. We then got orders to be ready to move at once and loaded the camels, but nothing came of it. We were now some way north of Deir el Bela, in a long valley running parallel with the coast line, whose sand dunes we could see a mile or two



away to the west. In front and on our right were grass covered hills which cut off all view of what was going on towards Gaza, but we could still hear a good deal of firing. It was a very hot day with a khamsin blowing, and as we lay by our arms, kits made up ready for the order to fall in, we were soon extremely thirsty, though we dared not touch our water bottles, having no idea when they would be replenished, nor of course could we rig up any kind of sun-shelter. About 9 o'clock Colonel Morrison returned with the news that the 155th Brigade were moving into position to counter-attack an enemy force threatening the right flank of the 54th Division, and that we might be required to support the counter-attack or prolong it to the right. At ten we moved forward about a mile, and again piled arms, remaining in readiness to move. At two, half the horses were sent back to water ; and we should all of us have been very glad to accompany them. Soon after some empty fantassies were sent off on camels in the hope of getting some water, but before they returned, at about six o'clock, we moved forward to take up an outpost position overlooking the Wadi Ghuzzeh, previously reconnoitred by the C.O. and Major Neilson. The country was extremely difficult, precipitous cliffs and narrow gullies, besides being completely unknown to us, and it was a really wonderful feat on the part of Colonel Morrison to indicate to each company its exact position in the dark on a wide front, seeing that he had only been once over it himself and that in a great hurry. Companies were all in position by 9 p.m. and were busy digging themselves in to very hard soil, sometimes almost rock. The Brigadier visited us and told us that the 54th Division would retire through us during the night, and that we must be prepared to stop any attempt on the part of the Turks to follow them, and must expect a good shelling in the morning. Meanwhile some water had arrived and everyone got a drink of tea, which put new life into us. The



BEDOUINS, KHAN YUNIS.



night was as cold as the day had been hot, but passed quietly save for a sudden outburst of rifle-fire to our right, which we rightly put down to someone with the wind up. The retiring troops passed through us in good order but very exhausted. As daylight gradually broke we got our first sight of Gaza and the country south of it, with which we were to become extremely familiar in the next seven months. We were a mile or so from the Wadi Ghuzzeh, with the extraordinary Hill of Tel el Jemmi away on our right, while the Red House among its fruit trees and the white dome of Sheikh Nebhan were conspicuous in the foreground. Behind them stretched Happy Valley, seeming to run right up to the tree-crowned summit of Ali el Muntar, while on its left were Kurd and Border valleys and the sand dunes, and on its right a tumbled mass of green uplands with sudden red cliffs marking nullahs and wadis. The position of the town itself was shown by the minaret of the mosque and one or two other taller buildings. The whole scene seemed utterly peaceful in the morning sunlight, not a shot was fired all day, and a big cloud of dust to the north-west made many of us think that the Turks were evacuating the place. During the morning cavalry patrols moved forward from our right flank and disappeared among the hills, apparently encountering no opposition, and some white ambulance sand carts went through in the same direction in order to attempt to pick up some of the wounded, which our men had been forced to abandon the night before. We never heard the result of their mission, but fear they had no success.

It was another very hot day, with a khamsin blowing, and the hard, shelterless hill-sides were a poor place to spend it on. About 4 p.m., however, we were relieved, and moved back to the bivouac area in Inserrat where we were able to take off our boots and enjoy a full night's sleep.

The history of the first battle of Gaza may be read elsewhere. The Division was in reserve, and had no part in it.



It is said that the Turks were in two minds whether to hold the town or not, and in consequence a sudden attack might well have found them with divided counsels and have taken the place and a large number of prisoners with it. The water shortage, which brought the scheme to failure, would not have existed if we could have got possession of the town, which was well supplied with wells. As we did not do so on the 26th it is difficult to see how our Division could have been thrown into the fight on the 27th, considering that there was not enough water for the troops already engaged. Moreover, had the night march of the 26th to Inserrat been continued as far as Gaza, we should hardly have deserved the name of fresh troops by the morning of the 27th, and had our Division been used there would have been practically no infantry reserve east of the canal, and the risks of such a situation will be obvious to everybody.

## CHAPTER X

### SECOND BATTLE OF GAZA.

IF the first battle of Gaza was a legitimate gamble—the second was foredoomed to failure from the start. Given fair warning and three weeks in which to strengthen their position—and probably no army in the world can beat the Turks at spade work—given moreover a natural stronghold, reinforcements and innumerable machine-guns, the enemy could certainly withstand a frontal assault by the same troops as he had already beaten off in a surprise attack, strengthened only by one newly formed Division, while the great prolongation of the Turkish line to the west made any turning movement out of the question. Our artillery was utterly insufficient to deal with carefully constructed trenches among cactus hedges, more terrible than barbed wire, of whose positions they were not really certain, while our two trump cards, tanks and gas shell, were certainly not sufficient to make up for other defects and to win us the game.

Still all this is of course mere wisdom after the event. We certainly did not believe ourselves preparing for a forlorn hope and we went into the second battle in perfect confidence that we should be bivouacked among the Gaza olive trees at its close.

There was, however, a good deal to be done first. On March 29th we rested, and a welcome shift in the direction of the wind helped us to get even with our thirst. The next day a supply of gas masks arrived, of the old appalling

flannel kind, which went all over the head, and their mysteries were explained to us by Lieut. Gray, assisted by private instruction from those who had served in France. On the 31st the Battalion moved to a new bivouac area closer to the wadi, screened from prying eyes at Gaza by a gentle rise in the ground. Rations were a bit thin at this time, with the rail-head so far behind us and so large a force to be fed, but the situation was greatly eased by the fact that we could now employ wheeled transport with little difficulty. The men were kept well employed. We had to supply parties of 300, 500 and finally 600 for work in the wadi under R.E. direction, or to act as covering parties for such work. The former consisted either in cutting ramps to enable traffic to get down the precipitous banks or in digging wells in the wadi bottom. The work was hard and progress slow, especially with the wells. A large square hole had to be dug to a depth of some four feet, when a shelf would be left, and another four feet taken out, and so on, till the bottom man was working in the bowels of the earth, and every shovelful he took out had to be passed up from step to step, so that four or five other men had been employed before it reached the top. Damp patches were sometimes found quite early but the hopes they raised were usually delusive and water was only struck at a considerable depth, and then not in any abundance. Fortunately wells sunk in other parts of the wadi proved more successful, but it was a little trying to read in Mr. Belloc's few paragraphs on our campaign—"of the Wadi Guzzeh, that considerable body of water, just now in full depth, which runs down . . . to the Mediterranean which it enters by a small elevation called the calf's hill." One sympathises with the difficulties of a man who sets out to write of the topography of any part of the world in which there may be fighting as if he was personally familiar with it—and the calf's hill (of which we, who were on the spot, had never heard) was a fine touch. But surely



TYPICAL SMALL NULLAH NEAR WADI GHUZZEH.





it might have struck Mr. Belloc that if the wadi—in point of fact bone dry—had contained a considerable depth of water, the first battle of Gaza would not have failed through drought.

Covering party work was more attractive, for the Turks kept well to their own side of the valley, where they were doubtless equally fully occupied with pick and shovel, and there was nothing to do except lie in the grass and admire the really beautiful flowers. But as under such circumstances very few men protect very many, it was the digging that most often came our way. The work went on without intermission from six in the morning to ten at night, each man doing a five or six hours' shift, and so hard pressed were we to find the numbers required that some men had sometimes to be put into two shifts on the same day, which, with the marches to and from camp, made as hard a day's work as one could wish to avoid.

On Sunday, April the 3rd, a heavy battery on our side made an unprovoked assault on the Turkish lines, to which they were not slow to respond and several shells fell within the confines of our camp. Most of the men were away however on fatigue, and no one was hurt. On the 7th the Battalion took over a section of the outpost line and the fatigues slackened off, but most men were still employed for a shift by day in addition to their outpost duties. The covering parties were now pushed further out to protect reconnaissances by senior officers, while in the darkness long camel convoys went out to fill with water the old cisterns which dotted the hills beyond the wadi. The enemy outposts moved forwards at night, and going out at dawn one often saw them withdrawing or watched the distant figures of Turkish cavalry on the sky line towards Mansura. There is a romance about the fighting Turk that one could never feel about the Boche. One knew all about the latter, the names of the towns in which he lived, and

what he did and thought and how he was educated. There was no mystery about him. But the Turk was different. He hailed from strange provinces about whose positions and whose very names we were more than hazy. He spoke a strange language, lived in strange ways on impossible food and uttered strange cries or sudden invocations to Allah in the silence of the night. He was unknown and mysterious and when we went patrolling against him in the dark there was a creepy feeling which was quite distinct from one's natural misgivings about his bayonet or bullet. But as yet we more than kept our distance. Sometimes a patrol working its way along the rough ridges towards Gaza would be met with a shower of long range bullets, but for the most part we did our work undisturbed—and so did he. In fact the real problem of an O.C. covering party was to find out who else on our side was covering too and where they were. On one occasion an officer of the 5th, having posted his own men in the valley, went up the southern ridge, where he discovered some compatriots lying out in the dew with a keen eye on Burjaliye and Apsley House, which they believed to be full of Turkish snipers. On his way back he was nearly shot by some indignant Londoners cautiously feeling their way out on a similar mission, and had the pleasure of informing them that their beautiful patrol work was rather a waste of labour.

On the 9th the 7th H.L.I. began the practise of turning the Turks out of Burjaliye, a little cactus walled orchard perched on the top of the southern ridge that bounded Kurd Valley. The Turks probably never had more than a small post in the enclosure, but they were able to keep up a good fire from their positions behind it and its daily capture caused an enormous amount of noise, if little else. On the 12th "A" Company took their turn in sending in the patrol amid a tremendous waste of ammunition on both sides, our casualty being Lieut. J. S. Agnew, who was hit in the arm

and whose services we thus lost for several months. It must be confessed that this daily repeated manoeuvre was generally considered to be a sign that the Staff had finally and definitely lost their wits, but it was really a scheme of deep cunning, as we afterwards discovered. The Burjaliye ridge and the El Sire-Kurd Hill ridge on its left, together with Happy Valley in between was the tract of country with which we were most familiar. At the bottom of the valley ran a large wadi, broadening out till it reached the Wadi Ghuzzeh a mile south of the Red House. On its way it was joined by innumerable tributary nullahs running down the sides of the two ridges and cutting them into a range of minor peaks. The sides of these nullahs were sheer cliffs often fifteen feet or more in depth so that they became really formidable obstacles to progress, though excellent places for shelter from artillery fire. They were the result, we supposed, of the sudden heavy winter rainstorms rushing down the hill sides, but for 350 days out of the 365 they were completely dry. During this time the Staff were not idle. Pamphlets on the attack, written for trench warfare in France, were liberally issued, and preliminary instructions to lessen the contents of the final orders kept arriving daily. One's brain became confused.

On April 16th all was ready and we left our outpost line and moved forward for the ill-fated second battle. The ball was opened by "A" Company, which in the afternoon of that day sent the usual daily patrol into Burjaliye, covering it with Lewis guns and flank patrols and suffering no casualties, but getting the recognised rise out of the Turks, whose enthusiastic rifle-fire gave life to the proceedings. On withdrawing from the enclosure, however, the company, instead of returning to camp, halted as soon as they were out of sight of the Turks, and lay up in a convenient hollow till dusk. The true cunning of this daily manoeuvre was now revealed. Had Burjaliye been visited for the first



time on the 16th, the Turks would certainly have had their suspicions roused and would have been specially on their guard, probably patrolling the place during the night. But the daily repetition of the little comedy had led them to suppose that it was a mere instance of the madness sent by Allah upon all unbelievers, and in consequence, when the same patrol issued from cover at nightfall and cautiously reoccupied the enclosure, they found it untenanted, and after sticking their bayonets into the tiny hut and nearly falling down the well, sent back a cheerful message that all was clear. They subsequently confessed to certain qualms when, themselves about 100 yards from the hedge, they perceived, through a gap, the glowing end of a cigarette, slowly waxing and waning as an undisciplined Turk, disobeying all the rules of war, solaced his vigil with tobacco. The escape of a single infidel from the garden, or even his noisy decease, would have given away the whole business, and they were much relieved when some careful stalking revealed nothing more alarming than an inconsiderate fire-fly slowly moving its wings across its luminous body.

As soon as the all clear came through the rest of the company moved up and placed a series of sentry groups along the far side of Burjaliye and down the valley to the west of it. There followed a dreary vigil in momentary expectation of the arrival of a Turkish patrol, which would have to be "sunk without a trace"—as the German diplomat said of the shipping. It was bitterly cold for bare knees and drill shorts. Several times the curious high-pitched cries with which the Turkish outpost keeps up his courage or reports his whereabouts issued from the darkness in front, but there were no developments, and about 11.30 p.m. unmistakable sounds from the rear announced the fact that the Brigade had arrived. How it was that the Turk did not also hear the inevitable disturbance caused by the arrival



NATIVE GIRLS, BELAH.



of some thousands of men, tool limbers, mules and camels, in utter darkness over unfamiliar and very rough country, will always be a mystery. But the fact remains that they appear to have been in complete ignorance of our proximity until made painfully aware of it the next morning. The Battalion had left camp at 8 p.m. on the 16th, and passed the Wadi Ghuzzeh by crossing 23. It then found the rest of the Brigade and formed up in two columns of companies and thirty-two camels (fourteen with S.A.A., sixteen with water and one each with medical and signalling stores), together with the limbers with tools in rear. About nine the Brigade moved off. After a mile, battalions were instructed to proceed independently. The assembly at the Brigade rendezvous and the advance to Burjaliye was an exceedingly difficult manoeuvre. Each battalion had to form up on a given frontage marked with stakes in a field of standing barley, and as the stakes were not visible in the darkness to locate them was not easy. The forward movement was directed by the Brigade Major marching on a compass bearing in front of the left flank of the left battalion and direction was maintained by frequent halts and accurate dressing. To add to the difficulties of darkness and unknown ground, the line of advance ran diagonally across a ridge running from the Turkish position to the Wadi Ghuzzeh. That the Brigade arrived at its destination without a hitch reflects great credit on the Staff work and is evidence of the benefit we had obtained from night training at el Arish. Soon after ten there was a halt, during which the men were given a drink from the water the camels carried, in order to ensure that their bottles should be full on the morrow. On arrival behind Burjaliye, companies changed their formation so as to be ready to move forward at dawn, "B" and "D" Companies taking the front line, and the men lay down to try and get a few hours' sleep—no easy task considering the cold and the heavy dew. The 6th H.L.I. prolonged the



outpost line to the right of "A" Company, who were now pleasantly conscious of the near presence of their friends, but considered them a very noisy crowd. In point of fact the whole operation was carried out with surprising quietness considering its difficulties, but ears strained to catch the faintest sound from the front naturally magnified the disturbance from the rear.

Stand-to was at 3.45 a.m., and there followed one of those "dreary, doubtful, waiting hours"—which to some temperaments seem more unbearable than anything that follows zero hour. There was no rum and of course no possibility of making tea, while even the nerve soothing cigarette was out of the question.

At 4.45 a.m. the Brigade advanced—the 7th on our right, and the 6th on their right again, while the Argylls were in reserve. "B" and "D" Companies moved through "A" Company's picket line and extended by platoons in succession as they got clear—"B" Company being on the left. "A" Company closed immediately the leading line was through and followed on in support to "D" Company, while "C" supported "B." It was beginning to get light and the indignant Turks suddenly perceiving lines of rough looking men advancing upon them, opened a brisk fire, to which was soon added the obscene stuttering of machine guns. They could, however, do little execution in the half light and, completely taken by surprise, they did not wait to try conclusions with us, but decamped, so that we were on our first objective, the line hill 230—Tel el Ahmar—in a very short time. Meanwhile our artillery had begun to join in and were registering Mansura Ridge. Four patrols were pushed forward and found the ground clear to the bottom of the ridge, and as soon as the artillery had finished they scaled the cliffs and looked over the top into open country stretching away to Ali el Muntar. The patrols under Lieut. A. R. MacEwen, who subsequently received the M.C., and

Lieut. T. B. Clark pushed on, met by a good deal of sniping, and had the pleasure of sending a Turkish cavalry vedette off at a hasty gallop. The enemy artillery were now beginning to take a hand in the game and having an intimate knowledge of the ground, as well as good observation as the light grew, were able to plaster the nullahs, in which we had mostly taken shelter, most assiduously. One shell fell within a few paces of the C.O. who was calmly moving forward in the open, but he did not so much as turn his head—no bad example for the men of the support companies, who witnessed the incident, and many of whom were under shell-fire for the first time. At 6.30 the two leading companies continued the advance and topped the Mansura Ridge. They were met by shell fire and a good deal of machine-gun fire from the right flank, the direction of Lees Hill and Outpost Hill, but the Turkish infantry had evidently determined to take no further share in the matter and had vanished from the scene.

There was thus no further prospect of a fight and "B" and "D" Companies began the more prosaic business of digging in on a line some way in front of Mansura. The support companies were removed from the wadies round Hill 230, as it was plain that the Turks had these most accurately registered, and moved up under shelter of the Mansura cliffs, where they were free from direct observation though bothered by 5.9s neatly dropped just over the edge. Parties took tools out to the advanced companies, Sergt. Paterson of "A" Company being killed by shrapnel while performing this duty. The digging companies had no kind of shelter until they managed to throw up cover for themselves in the very hard soil and were badly harrassed all day by machine-gun fire and shrapnel, though the casualties were extraordinarily light. In the afternoon, the fire having slackened somewhat, they began wiring in front of the position, and "A" Company relieved "B" at the digging,

at 8 p.m. "C" relieved "D," and it rejoined "B" under cover of the ridge.

By the evening of the 17th the preliminary stages of the attack had been carried out with complete success. The Turks had been everywhere taken by surprise. On our right the 54th Division had seized the Sheikh Abbas cliffs, a continuation to the westward of the Mansura Ridge. On our left was a considerable gap (filled in at night by two companies of the Argylls) and then came the advanced line of the 155th Brigade who had made good their jumping off place on the el Sireh ridge. Beyond them in the sand dunes the 53rd Division had advanced in the same way, and were ready to attack the Samson Ridge area. But the element of surprise was only to be found in these early stages and by the time the big attack was launched the Turk knew what our intentions were.

There was little sleep for anyone on the night of the 17th-18th. A counter-attack—though not expected—was quite possible, and digging and wiring went on all night, so that by dawn on the 18th, the fire bays were completed, though the trenches round the traverses were in some places still shallow. Water was boiled in the shelter of the cliffs and tea was issued to the men, who were very glad to get it. The whole of the 18th passed quietly as far as we were concerned; the machine-gun and artillery fire having few terrors now that we were dug in. The Staff had determined that this time we should not fail from lack of water, and the whole day was taken up with establishing dumps of this precious commodity, together with ammunition, rations and tools at various suitable points in the country now secured. As a consequence, while we lost the advantage of surprising the enemy, we were never more than moderately thirsty throughout the operations, for which we were duly thankful.

At 10 p.m. on the 18th we began to take down our wire entanglements in order to clear the ground for the advance



of the 156th Brigade, and at 4 a.m. on the 19th the 7th H.L.I. took over our trenches. We were withdrawn into the hollow behind Mansura, which was now full of guns; "B" Company was detached to look after the gunners (remaining away from the Battalion till the 21st) and these at 5.30 began a very creditable bombardment of the Turkish lines. Just before this the Battalion, which had been lent to the 155th Brigade, began its devious march across the exposed Kurd Valley, taking advantage of the winding wadies till it reached the el Sireh ridge and lay up in a nullah running up into Kurd Hill, being passed by the rear waves of the K.O.S.B. and R.S.F. advancing to their gallant but ill-fated assault on Outpost Hill. From here we could get no idea of what was going on, but we were able to observe the majestic though noisy and superheated advance of several tanks. The country was too much for them, many of the nullahs being beyond their jumping capacity, and the heat exhausting their crews and defeating their engines. We were supposed to be in reserve to meet a possible counter-attack from the woods to the east of Outpost Hill, but at 10 o'clock word arrived that we were no longer needed, and we recrossed the valley to the familiar Mansura hollow. This we found to be a noisy spot. Several batteries of 18-pounders were cracking away and the Turks were returning the compliment with heavier stuff. Just as we arrived they secured a direct hit on one of our limbers, killing the two wheelers and seriously wounding the driver—the other driver had a miraculous escape. Under the shelter of the cliffs we had some tea and filled our water bottles, and then listened to the noise of battle, wondering vainly what was happening. The position of reserve brigade may have its advantages, but it is trying not to know what you are "for." Our rôle depended entirely on the success of the other brigades, and our orders fluctuated throughout the day. This little scene would be again and again repeated: Company commander



to Platoon commanders—"We are going to attack Friar's Hill (or Delilah's Neck or Middlesex Hill, etc.). The company will form the first line on the right. Your platoon, 'N,' will form the first wave." N.—"Very good, sir." General saluting, and N.—having composed his features to a look of blood-thirsty enthusiasm which is quite absent from his heart—goes off to break the news to his faithful N.C.O.'s, who impart it in their turn to their sections. These last, as they are not paid extra for keeping up appearances, express their truthful opinion of attacks and leading waves with great force and point. But each successive order was in turn cancelled.

About 2 o'clock news came in that the Turks were massing in the woods near Dueidar Trench, and that we were required to keep an eye on them. The 6th H.L.I. were already across and the Argylls, followed by the 7th and ourselves, again negotiated Kurd Valley, getting slightly mixed up with a battalion of the 74th Division on the way. The 7th and Argylls now vanished from our ken, being used to support the shattered remnants of the 155th Brigade, who succeeded at dusk in getting a footing on Outpost Hill only to be counter-attacked and driven out in the dark. We came to anchor in a big hollow, peaceful except for a number of "overs"—bullets which topped the ridge in front and wounded a number of men. Many particularly dislike this impersonal manner of attack; they like their enemy to have his shot at him over his sights—hit or miss, trusting him to miss—and object to a blind bullet fired at someone else—and a very bad shot at that—finding them out in the decent obscurity of reserve lines. But in warfare you cannot even choose how you will be killed.

Darkness fell and we received orders to move up to the southern slope of Lees Hill in support of the 7th and Argylls, who had now definitely taken over from the 155th. The journey took us some time, owing to the complete darkness

and the difficulties of the country, and was only finally accomplished by the signalling officer going forward with a drum of telephone wire to locate Brigade Headquarters. Having done this the Battalion advanced, guided by the wire, and we were in position by 10 p.m. and dug ourselves shelter pits before going to sleep. The Battalion dump was shifted from Mansura Ridge to Kurd Valley during that night and the ration convoy on its way to Mansura had to be found and led into our new area—difficult work, but most successfully accomplished by our energetic second in command. The dropping bullets were particularly annoying the next morning, two men being killed and four wounded in their shelters during stand-to. At dawn officers were sent out to locate the 7th and Argylls. The latter were found among the wadis of Blazed Hill—but the former, after a gallant attempt to rush Outpost Hill, had dug themselves in less than 200 yards from the Turks with a burnt-out tank on their left and were completely cut off by five hundred yards of open country which no one could cross owing to the Turkish fire. On the right the 156th Brigade, whose advance was dependent on the success of the Outpost Hill attack, had lain out all day under shell-fire unable to move, and, though lighter than those of the 155th, their casualties were also heavy. The 54th Division on the right again, and the 53rd among the sand dunes, had for the most part had their attacks shattered by machine-gun fire, though the 53rd were in possession of Samson's Ridge, while the Imperial Mounted Division and the Desert Column, fighting in a line half-way to Beersheba, had failed to produce anything like a break through. The Turk forewarned and but little troubled by our artillery fire, which was on quite a different scale to what we gave him the following November, held his positions with the tenacity which had long ago made his reputation as a defensive soldier.

Meanwhile at G.H.Q. the momentous decision was being

taken, on the recommendation of General Dobell and the Divisional commanders, not to attack again on the 20th, but to consolidate the ground won, and to start trench warfare. Had the decision been different few indeed of us would have seen the evening—but as it was the Battalion got out of the second battle very lightly, our total casualties on April 17th being eight other ranks killed and one officer and thirty-two other ranks wounded, while at the end of the month they had only increased to ten killed and three officers and fifty-nine other ranks wounded. We were thus very much more fortunate than the 7th, but the cases were to be reversed in our next engagement. The force had suffered about 7000 casualties by the 20th and three tanks were knocked out and derelict, while the effects of our gas-shell were certainly not very apparent. We had, in fact, underrated the Turkish resistance, a mistake not uncommon during the war, and had to resign ourselves to a summer of trench warfare with the best grace we could muster.

## CHAPTER XI

GAZA. 1ST MAY TO 7TH NOVEMBER, 1917.

THE beginning of May found the Battalion in support, with its Headquarters on Queen's Hill. As was usually the case, when in support the time of all ranks was taken up with continuous fatigues and other duties. At this time, besides supplying working parties for the Royal Engineers and burying cable for the Brigade Signalling Officer, various parties, usually of 200 each, were employed in constructing communication trenches for the battalions of the Brigade in the front line. On 3rd May the Battalion relieved the 7th H.L.I. in the front trenches on Lees Hill. Each company held a part of the front line and furnished its own support. The period in the line until relieved by the 7th H.L.I. on 10th May was uneventful. A considerable amount of time was spent in improving the trenches and the occasional light shelling which took place did not do much damage and inflicted no casualties. The Turk it was observed was spending his time in much the same way and at first exposed good targets for our machine-gun fire; latterly, however, as a result of our fire his work was carried out under cover.

The only casualty during this period was Captain T. S. S. Wightman, who was accidentally wounded by a cartridge exploding in a cook's fire. After a week the Battalion was relieved by the 7th H.L.I. and the period in support was taken up in night fatigues for work in the line and by gas demonstrations carried out by the Divisional Gas Officer



under somewhat trying circumstances, as the weather was very hot and not conducive to the wearing of a gas mask. Captain Dingwall Kennedy unfortunately had to leave the Battalion sick and his place was filled by Captain D. C. MacArdle.

Prior to relieving the 5th A. & S.H. the Battalion had a "night in bed"—a most unusual occurrence. On this occasion the Battalion held Kurd Hill, Heart Hill, Carnarvon Redoubt, Snowdon Street, Sniper's Spur and Sniper's Post. The country was flat and rather uninteresting except on the extreme left held by "D" Company, where the outlook was over sandy hills studded here and there with patches of scrub. Captain A. R. MacEwen and 2nd Lieut. T. C. Price were lent for temporary duty with a battalion of the 155th Brigade, and as a result the former took a hand in a successful night raid by the K.O.S.B. on "Sea Poast."

On Brigade instructions standing patrols were furnished all along the line at night under the charge of two officers. On the night 18/19th May the 155th Brigade made a considerable demonstration against Umbrella Hill. In order to cover the whole front the line had to be very thinly held, and in consequence of the drifting sand considerable difficulty was experienced and much work required in keeping the trenches in repair.

On 27th May the 6th H.L.I. relieved the Battalion, when some difficulty was experienced owing to the camel transport being delayed. The Battalion was situated in Brigade reserve with headquarters at Kurd Hill, the only detached party being one platoon of "D" Company under Captain Townsend, who occupied No. 6 redoubt. The whole Battalion was soon engaged on numerous fatigues which continued to the end of the month. On 2nd June the Battalion relieved the 7th H.L.I. in the right sector of the Brigade line lying on Happy Valley and Lees Hill; each company holding part of the line as before.

At this time word was received that Major J. B. Neilson had been awarded the D.S.O. for his good work in Gallipoli.

The enemy showed very few signs of activity, an occasional patrol only being encountered. On the night of 11th June a demonstration was taken part in against Outpost Hill to assist a trench raid by the 5th K.O.S.B. against Belah Post. The distance between the lines here was about 600 yards. Men were sent out with dummy figures to a nullah about 300 yards from the Turkish line. At a fixed hour these dummies were fixed in position on the top of the bank in imitation of a line advancing to attack. The men took shelter in the nullah, working the figures into position by a rope and Verey lights were fired. We then opened fire on the Turkish line. Whether the Turk imagined he was being attacked or not is doubtful, but he did not reply with any considerable fire until one hour had elapsed; then he kept it up for about fifty minutes. The next night "B" Company undertook the unenviable task of bringing in the dummy figures and found the ridge on which they lay occupied by the enemy in several places.

On 13th June the Battalion was relieved by the 7th battalion Essex Regiment and moved to a much longed for camp on the beach beside Regent's Park. The period spent beside the sea will always be looked back upon by all who shared in it as one of the most enjoyable times of the war. To be able to have the prospect of the sea within fifty yards is always enjoyable, but more than ever so when the climate is such that the pleasantest moments are those spent in the water. Just a sufficient amount of drill and work was put in to make the rest enjoyable, and even a long and tiring "Brigade Exercise" was able to be faced when we knew that a bathe awaited us at the end.

During this period the Battalion exchanged their Mark VI. rifles for those of Mark VII. and had a few days' practice at a range close by.

Captain F. W. Brown, R.A.M.C., was with us for a short period, taking the place of Captain MacArdle who departed on home leave.

No reserve area could compare with Regent's Park. It was situated among the sandhills, on the very edge of the Mediterranean, and when the sun made the atmosphere too hot a medium for comfortable living, the sea was always there. Our bivouac area lay within a mile to the east of the mouth of the great Wadi Ghuzzeh, down which flowed for the last mile or so of its course clear fresh water. This attracted a great variety of birds, including flamingoes and storks, and on the bushes near the wadi were found these wonderfully nimble little green tree frogs. Small fish abounded in the pools ; but pools were not popular with the malaria experts and attempts were being made to drain all casual water into one channel, put a little paraffin in the pools that could not be emptied by draining, and so either remove or render ineffective the breeding places of the anophylis mosquito. The day's work lay on the rifle range or in practising trench-to-trench attacks. There was no enemy artillery-fire to disturb the calmness, and each day gave the same opalescent eastern sky at dawn and the same fast-dropping sun falling below the sea at night. A battalion could really rest at Regent's Park, and we were somewhat unwilling to move when orders came on the 9th July to take over the front line at Dumb-bell Hill.

A night-march across the rear of our own lines on compass bearings, a rest at dawn, and we took over the line from Bury Hill to Yapton Redoubt. In this part of the line the trench system, which was opposite and to the left of Gaza, gave place to mutually supporting redoubts and defended localities. The Battalion was disposed with three companies in the line and "C" Company in reserve. There was nothing to do in this sector beyond the ordinary routine of trench garrison. The distance between the enemy line and our own was so



INSIDE YAPTON POST.





great that there was no chance of the painful intimacy of other sectors. But the country in front was full of interest; it was sweeping, undulating ground, cut up by many deep wadis, and generally the only way to be sure that there was no enemy movement in a wadi was to have a post in it or on the bank.

Yapton Redoubt was the most curious in formation; a deep wadi ran through the middle of it and the wire blocks on the enemy side were so ingenious that on a dark night it was extremely difficult for patrols to find the way in. An attack up the wadi would have been difficult, as small bombing posts had been constructed on the top of the high banks, and while they could have lobbed over bombs into the gully, they were almost out of bomb range themselves. However, the scheme of defence was never put to the test. In an old cactus-bound garden about 1500 yards in front of Yapton we had a day observation post perched in a tree. The cactus hedge was a mass of ripe prickly pears, and the art of eating them was only learnt after a lengthy period spent in extracting the fine thorns from one's fingers, mouth, tongue and throat. Within the hedge were fig trees, small vines, tomatoes, pomegranates and a small native hut, but huts in this part were not entered as they swarmed with small insects more desirous of making our acquaintance than we were of making theirs. One step within was sufficient. "C" Company sent nightly patrols to the Wadi Sihan and to Two Tree Post, but they returned each morning with no tale to tell. Except when an enterprising member of a patrol entered the back door of a hut unknown to the officer who entered the front door. A little mutual stalking was indulged in with bombs ready, but fortunately recognition took place before attrition.

The only excitement was the end of the Ramadan fast and the entrance on the Bairam month of feasting. G.H.Q. thought that the enemy might celebrate his

release from the month of denial by doing something rash or risky, and orders were sent broadcast for extra vigilance and doubled sentries. The eventful hour came and he sent over half-a-dozen battery salvoes on Dumb-bell Hill and Brighton Redoubt and peace reigned once more over our corner of Asia. The same situation occurred in Gallipoli in 1915 when we were facing the Turk and the result was also the same. On the 23rd July the Battalion was relieved by the 4th R.S.F. and passed into Divisional reserve at Wadi Simeon. It was about this time that fate transplanted in our midst a medical officer from Kirkliston.

At this time the enemy had several very strong and heavily wired redoubts in his front line, and of these, by far the most spectacular was dug round a derelict tank of ours, lost in the second Gaza battle. It was known to us as Tank Redoubt and lay opposite Abbas Apex in our own line and some 1600 yards away. Several very successful raids had been made on other of his strongholds and G.H.Q. detailed our battalion for a similar attempt on Tank Redoubt. Such an operation required skilful and exact preparation and very great accuracy. A scale model of the redoubt was made near the bivouac area and the raiding party, 300 strong, under Major Findlay, began active rehearsals. The "Destruction Party" were to form a spectacular feature of this raid. They were to carry 6-foot tubes full of ammonal for blowing gaps in the wire. The sappers, by using the mechanism of Mill's bombs, were able to devise a method by which the Mill's lever was released and five seconds after the tubes exploded. Hatchet men then were to rush in and clear the gaps. The system seemed to work well in practice. The raid was to take place while the Battalion was holding the line at Abbas Apex, and on August 5th Colonel Morrison with the rest of the Battalion took over this sector from the 4th R.S. Previously, parties of officers and men from the raiding party had gone out on patrol with the Royal Scots

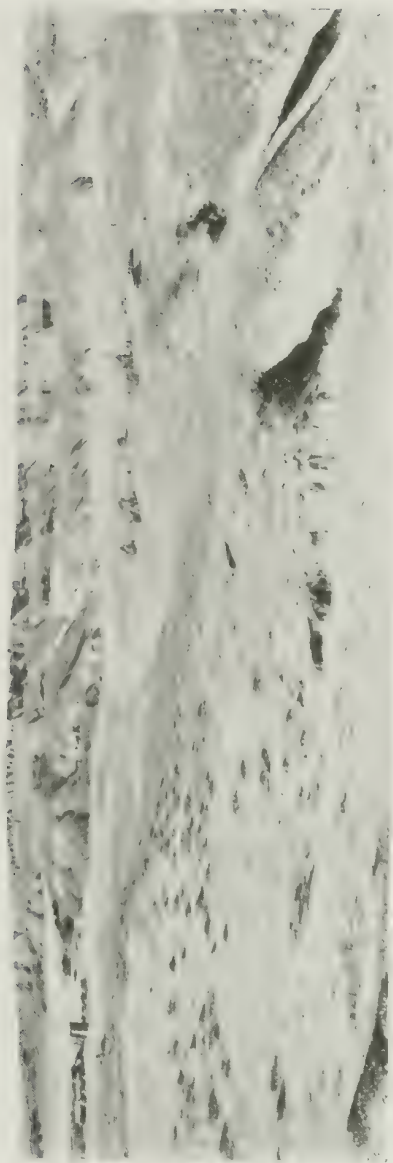
in order to familiarise themselves with the ground. On every occasion they met strong Turkish patrols, who usually held some old British trenches, dug by the Suffolks during the second Gaza battle, on a small ridge about 600 yards from Tank Redoubt, known as Suffolk Ridge. The first officer we sent out to familiarise himself with the ground had a much more exciting time than he bargained for, and only by being possessed of an excellent sense of direction did he return to us. It was a fitting introduction to what was in store for us in the No Man's Land in front of the Abbas Apex. The presence of a hostile patrol on the night of the raid would jeopardise everything and so it was determined to make an attempt to clear No Man's Land the night before. A patrol of two officers and thirty other ranks accordingly got orders to move out to the old British trenches to act as a decoy to entice the enemy to pursue them towards our lines, while on the flank were to be stationed two companies of another unit, whose orders were on hearing rapid fire coming from the patrol to close with the bayonet on the flank of the enemy and roll up his line against our wire. It was an intensely dark night and the patrol moved out after the two companies were safely hidden in cover. The first intimation of the Turk was the sight of a line of sparks from bombs being lit (the Turk then used brassards for lighting the fuses); then began quite a battle. Rifles and our Lewis guns opened out rapid fire, ceased fire, and opened again, and then began to withdraw. It was time, as the Turks were enveloping us. Several men had been hit and half the butt of the Lewis gun blown off by a bomb. It was difficult to estimate the number of the enemy, but an officer found himself in the third extended line of advancing Turks and reckoned we were up against a big roving patrol which had a good reputation for this sort of work. This officer, with a balmoral as a headdress and armed with a rifle and bayonet, escaped in the dark by his resemblance to a Turk and by his



bayoneting one of the enemy. The patrol extricated itself with ability, much helped by Corporal M'Lean in charge of the Lewis gun section, who took the gun after all of his team had been wounded and kept off the enemy by firing it from his shoulder. For his coolness and gallantry he received the first Military Medal awarded to the Battalion in Palestine. The Turks had been drawn on all right, but what of the charge by the two companies. That unfortunately miscarried. It came late and the two companies missed the flank of the enemy's advanced force, getting into the gap behind it and just in front of the enemy's reserve line which was also advancing. Thus they found themselves with no one in front of them, but with a bomb and rifle attack on both flanks. With some difficulty they were withdrawn. Our own patrol got home safely but Lieut. Milne and Pte. Graham were lost in the retiral. No one had seen Lieut. Milne fall, but months later we heard that he had died of wounds in a Turkish hospital. He was a great loss, as his bright and cheery nature helped all ranks.

As the result of this raid could not be said to have cleared the enemy of the extensive No Man's Land, the raid on Tank Redoubt had to be cancelled and the raiding party joined the Battalion in the line.

The next fortnight must rank as among the most unpleasant and least satisfactory periods of the whole campaign. The Turk was extremely active in No Man's Land, and while our last encounter had made him appreciate he was not going to have it all his own way in his midnight strolls, and while he apparently agreed to keep some 800 yards from our line, still beyond that point he considered the land was his preserve, and there he kept every night large floating patrols and maintained a garrison in the old British trenches, and he was most determined that we should not visit him. From the Apex an old road ran straight through our wire towards the Tank, crossed by another road at right angles about



SHEIKH ABBAS.



800 yards out. To these cross-roads, from which the trenches were about 400 yards distant, the Battalion sent at least one nightly patrol. The patrol then became a listening post or covering patrol and an officer and a man would proceed further to try to find out the Turk's night dispositions. These were discovered, and at length the reserve company asked permission to clear the trenches with the bayonet. The idea was approved, but a higher authority announced that it was preparing a scheme and that until the plan was ready we must not disturb the Turk unduly, but were to continue our patrols to the cross-roads and send on a small party to draw fire from the enemy holding the old British trenches. This was clear, and although unpleasant was regularly carried out, but all ranks got thoroughly tired of this job as it had to be done for about ten nights before the scheme appeared. It embraced artillery and machine-gun support, Verey lights and all the incidentals of a first-class night attack. The enemy was to be enclosed in a rectangle, three sides of which were to consist of shells and machine-gun bullets and the fourth of one company of another unit and "A" Company of the 5th. This side was to move inwards, clearing the old British trenches with the bayonet as it reached them. On the right was "A" Company, clear of the trenches, which fell to others, so that "A" Company's duty was to clear their side of Suffolk Ridge and keep in line with the company on their left. From the information gained by our patrols we did not anticipate that "A" Company would meet with any opposition. The Turkish position to their front was some 200 yards farther on than their objective. On the 20th August the operation was attempted. The trenches were strongly held, and the company on the left could not carry them. The line became confused in the darkness. Acting on orders previously issued "A" Company withdrew to the cross-roads; a patrol was then sent out but nothing was discovered. The Turks were



remaining in their trenches and the other company had gone home, so "A" Company also returned after a most unsatisfactory night's work and fifteen casualties, of which two were killed and four missing. Three of the missing were accounted for in this way. Two stretcher bearers with one stretcher case set off for our line, but unfortunately got confused at the cross-roads and wandered into a wadi where they were captured. We got word soon after from the bearers, by letter dropped from a Turkish aeroplane, that they were safe, and after the Armistice we were glad to hear that Pte. Brooks, the wounded man, had returned safe, if not sound, as he had lost a leg.

There is an amusing incident which occurred at this time when the Brigade held the Apex. An officer's patrol was sent out by another unit one very dark night to reconnoitre the ground between the Apex and Tank Redoubt. Having covered the ground they returned to their own lines, where the officer sent the patrol in under a corporal and decided to go out again with his sergeant to endeavour to get some information regarding a particular part of the enemy's line. Off they went and after having gone some distance were quite at a loss as to where they were. They suddenly came up against some barbed wire and thinking that it might be the Turkish lines decided to lie down and listen. Very soon they heard voices talking in a language unmistakably eastern. They distinguished such words as Achmed, Abdul, etc., and jumped to the conclusion that they were within a few yards of the enemy. While they were rapidly considering the best way of beating a hasty retreat they were greatly relieved to hear the raucous voice of a sleepy Scot exhorting the speakers in very fluent language to take the ration camels away from his vicinity. In the darkness they had described a semi-circle and returned to their own lines.

On the 24th the Battalion was relieved and went into

Brigade reserve at Tel el Ahmar, occupying the redoubts about two miles behind the front line. By the beginning of September we were back in the Wadi Simeon working on fatigues by night and day. After a fortnight of this, orders came to rejoin the rest of the Brigade at Sheikh Nahkrur. This was a bivouac area near to the tomb of some ancient holy man and almost within the shadow of Tel el Jemmi, the huge circular earth-tower, which was the most southerly outpost of the Crusaders. There we began a hard programme of training in musketry, bayonet-fighting, physical and close-order drill and movements by night, a plain showing that we were entering again the valley of decision. On the 19th, General Hill, the commander of the 52nd Division, inspected the Brigade, and, after complimenting it on the steadiness of drill and marching, foretold the near approach of the day when all its steadiness and valour would be required. The last week spent at Sheikh Nahkrur we were attached to the 155th Brigade, the remainder of our Brigade having gone nearer the line as they had come out before us. Left to ourselves we thoroughly enjoyed life. The training on the open country was a delightful change, and after our recent experiences we were easily able to devise small night operations of the most hair-raising kind. It was here that our Battalion Concert Party made their debut. There were seven of them, Corpl. Hamilton, Ptes. F. Williams, A. Heron, J. M'Ardle (Ella Rish), Sergt. R. Lyon, Ptes. T. Elliot and J. B. Smith. The pioneers rigged up a stage with its back to a high cactus hedge and from the performance the future success of the company was assured, and to the company, as well as to the pioneers who afterwards erected and decorated stages in the open or in nullahs, we owed much for the entertainments given. Battalion sports were also held. Most who were there will remember the stalwart Pte. Little walking round the tiny transport donkey with the "Bint" up. Another worthy effort of the pioneers was the erection

of a palatial hut when an officer's mess dinner was held, our first since leaving Mahamdiya. A move was made on the 29th when the battalion arrived in the Abbas sector, coming under the command of the G.O.C. 234th Brigade. The remainder of the Brigade took over the Edinburgh sector of the line from Outpost Hill westwards. A change was made on October 5th when we moved into reserve at Apsley House where the other battalions of the Brigade joined us a week later. Training was continued. Particular attention was paid to the specialists, and Brigade Bombing and Sniping Schools were started. Lewis gunners, in their little groups, sweated over the dusty ground and picked their weapons to pieces almost every hour. The men were exercised in attacks over the open and in surprise attacks on unknown positions. Parties of officers visited the coastal sector and examined diligently the enemy lines. Each day saw a keener polish put on the weapon which was so soon to be used. The strain was beginning to be felt when, on the 24th October, the guns on our whole front began the overture to the third battle of Gaza.

Following our custom we had been living in a nullah, but the first rain of the season took us by surprise on 25th October, and the dry bed became a stream and all the little cubby holes became full of water; the lightning was amazingly brilliant and the roar of the thunder made the bombardment sound tame in comparison. There was not a soul in the Battalion but was soaked to the skin. It was a curious thing as the conditions steadily got worse to hear the men instead of grousing singing their favourite songs till day broke and a sunny morning dried up everyone in a few hours.



OBSERVATION POST IN FRONT OF YAPTON POST.





## CHAPTER XII

ADVANCE BEYOND GAZA. WADI HESI, SAUSAGE RIDGE,  
ESDUD, KUBEIBEH, NEBI SAMWIL, TAHTA

THE 31st brought news of the success of the 20th Corps and the fall of Beersheba. Preparations were made for removal and on the 1st of November the Brigade went into Corps Reserve at Regent's Park. That night the other two brigades of our Division and the 53rd Division went over the top before midnight, and by dawn had taken the whole of the enemy's front and support lines from Umbrella Hill to the sea. In so doing they had bent the seaward end of his defence back on the town, but he was so heavily echeloned far back along the shore, that it was not until the 7th that a passage could be cleared along the edge of the sea. During those six days the Battalion lay in instant readiness to move. When it did move the Turk was still in Gaza in considerable numbers, and when we were as far north as Esdud we heard that certain strong points in his line were still holding out. He had, however, began his retreat and we knew that what we would have to deal with would be rear-guards, prepared to sacrifice themselves to the last man to save their main body.

At eleven o'clock on the morning of the 7th the Brigade had been under weigh for an hour and we were tramping over the uneven ground which marked the site of the enemy's old front line, battered out of all shape by seven days' artillery bombardment. The sand was more than ankle-deep

and the going heavy in the extreme. The day was hot and steel helmets were never the lightest of head-gear. Still the men marched admirably and by 17.00 the Battalion was at the Wadi Hesi, twelve miles north of Gaza, where the B.G.C. gave orders to secure the ridges on the other side of the wadi. It was an interesting situation. The Battalion had halted on the shore, on which it had been marching all day, half a mile or so south of the Wadi Hesi. Darkness was falling; the two leading companies ("A" and "B") received orders to move at once across the wadi, turn inland and secure certain small heights which could with difficulty be seen. They were informed that the 7th H.L.I. would be following to occupy other heights on the left. The companies moved and almost immediately met a cavalry picquet which reported having been driven off our objective, with the loss of their officer, by a large body of Turks. The companies got across the wadi and turned inland just off the shore facing their objective, which was just sufficiently visible for a compass bearing to be taken. The company commanders having got this bearing felt a load taken off their minds and as it was now quite dark made sure of the disposition of their companies. Soon the advance continued, a hill was reached, but firing from the front indicated that this was not the objective. A patrol moved out under Lieut. Gilchrist, who reported another hill in front held by the enemy. This hill was charged, a deep trench being found a little below the summit; a wounded Turkish officer was captured and one Turk bayoneted, the rest bolted and got clear. Our casualties in this charge were six. The hill was consolidated; a picquet going into position in front captured a Turk with a rifle almost red-hot. The night was fairly quiet, though continuous rifle and machine-gun fire went on all night, but as the bullets were nearly all going beyond our left we surmised the Turks' next position did not face us. The 7th H.L.I. were now on our left. In the trenches rushed were

found bags of oranges and a pot of hot soup, which looked as if we had effected a surprise.

With the first suggestions of light on the morning of the 8th our glasses disclosed some Turks in a trench which seemed to run away from us and face obliquely to our left. No. 1 and 2 platoons of "A" Company under Lieuts. Sweet and Parr were despatched to rush this trench, keeping it on their left as they advanced. This was successfully done and the trench entered from the back and the garrison of nine brought back with their arms and equipment and one very hot machine-gun. The prisoners were big fellows with new equipment and clothing. We had no casualties in this little raid. A picquet was left in the captured trench.

When morning broke we found that we were on our objective all right. In front stretched a wonderful view of a plain studded with orange and lemon groves with fresh green foliage, odd plantations, cactus hedges and a village or two. Immediately below us on our right lay a big orchard with some houses and hidden there were some snipers that worried us a bit and killed a machine-gun officer and Corpl. Kelly of "A" Company. Looking behind we saw the importance of having secured the hill we were on. It made a perfect observation post for observing the shore, which was now crowded with the remainder of our Division and others just arriving. Unfortunately there was a similar hill on our left which was not assaulted by the troops on our left until some hours after daybreak. We could see Turks on it and soon well-directed shell-fire was sprinkled along the shore. After this hill was taken the fire was indirect and much less effective; our own portion had only one dose of the enemy's shell-fire, but it was brisk while it lasted and there were a few wounded casualties including Lieut. Tomeny.

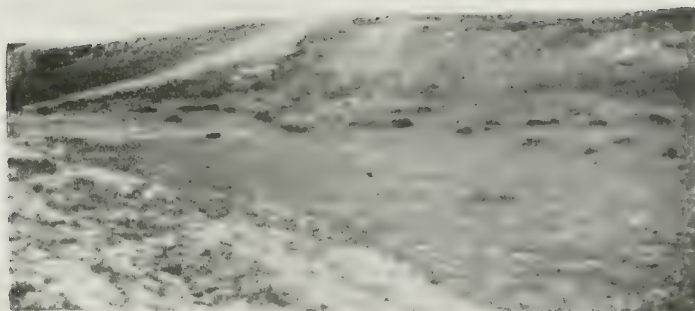
In the forenoon it looked as if the Turk might develop a counter attack from the orchard below us, as some 300 Turks were seen advancing in extended order into a plantation



about 2000 yards away, but an hour or so later they were seen going back and all sniping stopped. The thick cover afforded by the plantations made it almost impossible to detect movement near us.

At 12.30 orders were received from the Brigade to have strong patrols ready to push into Herbieh to cover the right flank of an attack to be delivered by the 155th Brigade against the ridge about 4000 yards south by east of Hesi Summit. This was not necessary, for at 14.45 Colonel Morrison received instructions for an attack on the southern continuation of the 155th Brigade's objective. Attacks of this sort are of necessity quickly arranged, and this resulted in our going into action without any machine-guns accompanying the infantry, as the enemy's shell-fire had made it necessary to withdraw their mules to cover and there was no time to get them back for the start, nor did artillery fire on either sides play any important part in the coming battle. There was desultory shelling by both sides till darkness fell, but we felt sure that neither side suffered any casualties from that source.

From our position the ridge, known afterwards to the Battalion as Sausage Ridge, was a crest line, quite four thousand yards away, with orange groves and undulating country between, thickly sown with enemy trenches, just newly evacuated by the Turks. The 5th A. & S.H. were to attack on our immediate right, and the 6th H.L.I. to deliver a converging attack from the south-west. The ridge was to be carried as soon as possible, and packs were dumped to make the moving lighter. The frontage of each battalion was approximately 400 yards and a tree marked the centre of our objective. The bearing was  $113^{\circ}$  and as the tree disappeared almost immediately after the attack was launched, the advance was compass-directed. As we stood, the objective appeared to be a slight height just beyond a low saddle in a nearer ridge of hills. Behind this ridge ran



SAUSAGE RIDGE, DEIR SINEID.



the main road from Gaza northwards, and it was certain that the enemy would defend it desperately.

"C" and "D" Companies were in the firing-line and at 16.00 the men dropped down through the orange groves of Herbieh, pulling the ripening fruit as they passed, and made rapidly for the distant ridge. Before they were half-way across the level ground darkness had set in. The Argylls on the right were directing but the 155th Brigade on the left was completely out of touch. Firing could be heard from their direction and, as a matter of fact, they had enough to do to hold up an enemy attack on their left from Askalon. At 17.15 the enemy on our own front opened a very heavy fire from rifles and machine-guns, and, as we drew nearer, he began to put up flares in large numbers. It was impossible to keep in touch with Battalion Headquarters, and the conduct of the attack and the use of reserves had to be decided by the officer in the front line. Thus it was that both the reserve companies were put into the fight before any orders could be received from Colonel Morrison.

The configuration of the ground constituting the immediate objective was afterwards ascertained to be very different from what it had appeared to be when viewed from a considerable distance in the gathering darkness. Instead of a long unbroken ridge our attack fell upon an isolated mound lying in the centre of a decided indentation on the main ridge. In the first charge the Battalion carried this mound and that part of the ridge immediately behind it with the bayonet. Further progress was impossible owing to machine-gun fire from defiladed positions on the main ridge, while bombs and rifle grenades were freely used by the enemy. Our men were able to hold on to the mound and make an effort at consolidation, assisted by the Argylls, but they were soon forced back from the portion of the ridge which they had occupied. They fell back to a slight nullah where they were rallied and hurriedly reorganised. A second



advance and their bayonets retook part of the ridge, but only to be driven off again. Another time and yet another did they return and capture the ridge, only to find it untenable. Then Major Findlay decided that it was useless to make a further attempt and that it was better to hold on to the mound which had been to some extent consolidated and try to establish a line running N.N.W. from it. But the enemy pushed his machine-guns forward and concentrated all his fury on our precarious position, which he enfiladed from the left and left rear. Gradually its defenders were driven westwards along the west of the mound into the depression behind, where they rallied and re-formed, and from which they retook the position. After a game effort to hold on they were once more compelled to retire. By this time the fog of battle had enveloped everything. Major Findlay and Captain Townsend were dead on the top of the hill. Major Brand and eight other officers were out of action; 190 men were dead or wounded. The remaining officers decided that it was useless to make any further attack and withdrew to Battalion Headquarters with the remainder of the men. The Argylls and the 6th H.L.I. continued to hold a line farther south on the ridge, but out of immediate touch with the enemy. The Turks still continued their heavy rifle and machine-gun fire but made no attempt to advance. At midnight their fire ceased entirely and shortly afterwards the 7th H.L.I. relieved our Battalion, which moved back to a bivouac area near Herbieh.

This was the most severe of our night attacks and the most costly. There must have been many individual acts of gallantry but the most outstanding feature of the operations was the collective grit, determination and bravery of the Battalion. Looking at the position next day, with our dead lying where they fell, one wondered how any human valour could have sufficed to capture it, and that not once but four times. There was none of the glamour of leadership about

## DUNES





this fight. In the pitch blackness every man had to lead himself and it says much that all led enemywards.

A day's rest, and the Battalion was rear-guard to the Brigade as far as el Butani, where the 5th A. & S.H. and the 7th H.L.I. were set to clear the enemy from their positions on the ridges south-west of Esdud. The 6th H.L.I. were in support and our Battalion was not called upon. Next day was Sunday and Colonel Morrison spent the day in reorganising the Battalion into two companies; No. 1 company being commanded by Captain W. L. Buchanan and No. 2 company by Captain R. H. Morrison, while six Lewis guns went into battalion reserve. The Australian Mounted Division were at Esdud next day and their innate love for chickens caused a large picquet of the battalion to be sent into the town to preserve order. The picquet squatted on the public square, gazed at solemnly by bearded and unclean descendants of the Philistines and unmoved by the rustlings and stifled laughter of hidden females. The town itself is almost certainly built on the site of the ancient Ashdod, one of the Philistine strongholds, but, if the architecture of the houses lends colour to the story of Samson's pulling down a temple, it also makes it apparent that Goliath must have had great difficulty in finding a lodging. No house in Esdud could have afforded shelter for more than three quarters of him.

For three days the Battalion remained at Esdud and on the 12th moved out against Yebnah. On the march signs were multiplying to assure us that the enemy was not standing upon the order of his going, but this day we expected to get into touch again. There is a long, low line of hills running north and south through Katrah and Mughair to Zernukah, and here the enemy stood to guard the road to Ramleh and his lateral communications to Jerusalem. The Battalion was fortunate for Yebnah fell without a shot. Not so fortunate the 155th Brigade, for they had a very



stiff day's fighting at Katrah, and only the arrival of the Yeomanry Division enabled them to carry the position. However by 16.00 the Turks were again in flight on the road to Jaffa. At Yebnah the Battalion remained for five days, holding an outpost line. From the roof of a house, which was our observation post, we could see the gleaming white tower of the monastery of Ramleh, and could hear the sound of its bells. The natives of Yebnah had oranges and figs for sale but they did not appreciate the fixation of prices, and their admiration for Colonel Morrison, their first Christian governor for six centuries, was tempered by their love of profiteering, now impossible of fulfilment. It was in this town that the Colonel gave orders to the omdeh or provost for the production of all arms held by the inhabitants. In about an hour some forty of the male population paraded at Battalion Headquarters in proud possession of the most suicidal collection of converted gas-pipes that the eye of man ever beheld. Abraham might have used them on the plains of Mamre. There were guns seven feet long, there were guns which might have been fired in the days of the owner's grandfather, but there was no gun which would not have been infinitely more dangerous to the firer than to the target. Of modern rifles, Turkish or British, there was none. They were probably too deeply buried to be dug up at half an hour's notice.

At 10.30 on the morning of the 18th the Brigade moved northwards along a road strewn with the jetsam of a retreating army, until Ramleh was reached. Here a bivouac area was taken up in an olive grove but after three hours' halt, orders were received for an advance on Ludd, the ancient Lydda. We arrived at 19.00 and bivouacked beside the road about half a mile south-west of the town.

Next morning the Battalion passed their starting-point, the railway-crossing of the Ramleh-Ludd road, at 09.30 and struck eastwards for Jimzu and Jerusalem. By this



ORANGE SELLERS, MEJDEL.



time our cavalry had entered Jaffa and the right wing of the Turkish army was far to the north. The left of their Gaza force were retreating on or through Jerusalem, and the intention of our G.H.Q. now was to throw the 52nd and 75th Divisions across country to try and cut the road running north out of the Holy City. The 75th had been coming up on our right but some miles away and slightly in rear, so that while we were crossing the Judean Hills they were skirting the foothills and advancing through Enab to Biddu. The 155th Brigade was pushed up to Berfilyah and the 156th to Beit Likkia to protect the left flank of our march across the face of the enemy. The only road across the hills appeared on the map as an ancient Roman Road, but it was no better than a goat-track, and in places impossible of identification. Limbers had to be left mid-way between Berfilyah and Beit Likkia. Darkness came down and with it heavy rain, with a strong, driving south-west wind. The distance as the crow flies is twelve miles but the actual distance covered must have been nearer twenty. At 22.00 the Battalion reached Likkia, just occupied by the 156th Brigade, and bivouacked beside the road. The ground was sodden. The men were in light tropical uniform and drenched to the skin. No fires could be lit and so the hours passed until the Battalion got orders at dawn to move. Our objective was Beit Dukka and the establishment of defensive positions to the south and south-east of it. If ever a road disgraced its name it was this Roman Road of the maps. Here was no purposeful track, broad, smooth and white, keeping its way straight through every obstacle. It bent and twisted and turned. Often it crept underneath a great rock and lost itself. Fifty yards farther on one would find it, shy and retiring, slipping down the face of a slab of rock, always with the deceitful promise that over the next hill it would be better behaved. Instead it grew worse, until the column was walking in Indian file up steep hill sides and across the necks of the valleys.



At 08.00 the 7th H.L.I. branched off to strike the town from the north, while the rest of the Brigade kept on, trying to identify their objective among the numerous villages which clung under the crests of the hills. The maps were not exact and the information from G.H.Q. was that Dukka was a village on a hill commanding considerable country. The village did sit on a hill, but, unfortunately, the hill was commanded on every side by much higher hills and Dukka was of no tactical value. So the Brigadier decided to move on Beit Anan, a similar village situated on the hill commanding Dukka from the south, and on the road to Kubeibeh, the ancient Emmaus. Scouts were pushing forward to search Beit Anan, and the head of the column had just appeared over a crest about 1500 yards from the village, when a brisk rifle-fire threw the leading companies into some confusion, and the second in command and scout officer had an experience they will not quickly forget, lying flat in the open being sniped at by a machine-gun. The enemy were not in any strength, but it was ten o'clock before the village was secured. Losses were not slight for they included Captain W. L. Buchanan, commanding No. 1 company, who was mortally wounded and died next day.

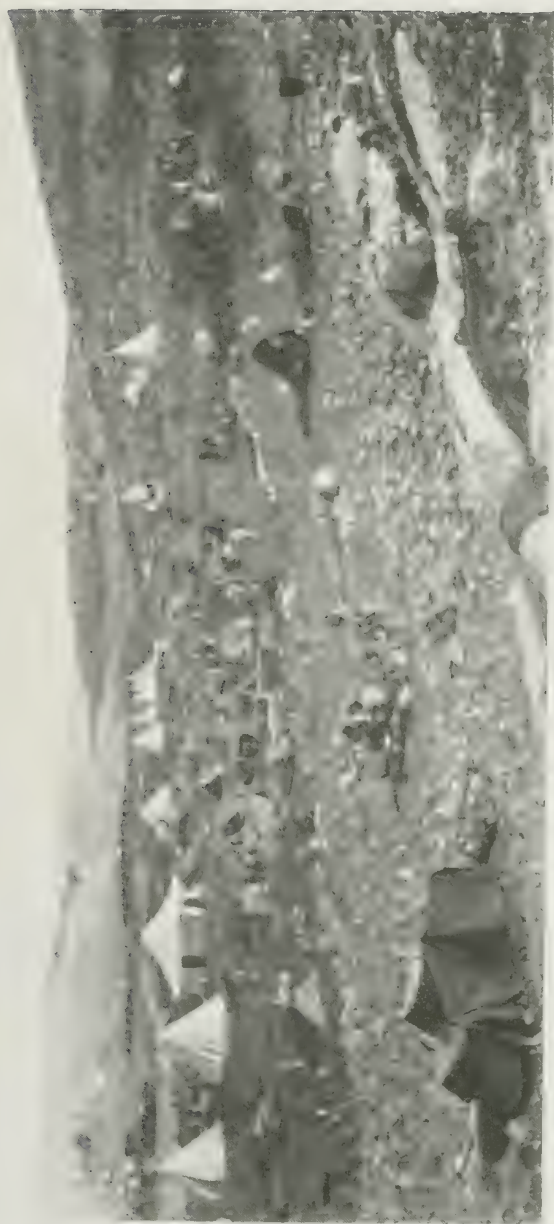
On being driven out of Beit Anan, the enemy retired up the neck of the hill to a walled garden situated on its very point and commanding Beit Anan, as well as the ridges running down from the garden itself. Later in the day the Turks occupied also the crest to the north-east of Dukka, from which a dropping machine-gun fire was kept up on the left of our position. No. 1 company, now commanded by Lieut. M'Lellan, was sent forward to the ridge, about 800 yards west of the enemy's position, where they remained that day and next night. No. 2 company held the front and left of the village. All day we could hear the thunder of the artillery of the 75th Division far to the south-west of us, beyond the hills, as they drove the Turks back on

Jerusalem. Night fell with a bitter wind blowing and a chill rain which penetrated to the bone and tried No. 1 company to the limit of endurance. Tea and blankets were got out to No. 2 company but, though several attempts were made, it was impossible to get them to No. 1 company. For twenty hours those men, in their tropical kit, endured the enemy's sniping and machine-gun firing, and the bitter cold and hunger and misery, hearing in the early morning the wind-borne chimes of the chapel bell in Kubeibeh calling the brothers to matins, until dawn found many of them unable to speak. During the night a squadron patrol of Hyderabad Lancers rode across the hills from the 75th Division into our lines, a truly wonderful feat across unknown country held by the enemy. At dawn the problem was, had the enemy evacuated the garden. Lieut. Agnew, the scout officer, set out to find out and C.Q.M.S. Kelly and Sergt. Black volunteered to accompany him. This is one of the nastiest jobs one can be asked to do. If the place is held the chances are against the first of the patrol returning alive. No observation from without was possible as a high wall surrounded the garden, which belonged to the Summer House of the Latin Hospice of Emmaus. The wall was approached with some difficulty, climbed, and only then was it certain that the Turk had gone and had evacuated his stronghold. The Battalion then moved into the garden and occupied Kubeibeh.

This village was mainly a colony of Franciscan brothers, Italian and Spanish, who had a magnificent church and hospice and under whose shadow the native houses were built. They welcomed us effusively and State calls were exchanged by Colonel Morrison and the Brother Superior. The latter esteemed us highly and, although the 75th Divisional Staff afterwards occupied his hospice, even the glamour of Staff scarlet failed to dim his eyes to the worth of the plain Scots battalion who first entered Emmaus.

The monastery kept a pig but it was sacrificed on the altar of friendship and Battalion Headquarters blessed the hand of S. Francis. In the monastery garden on the hill-top the Battalion rested for three days, that is, rested from fighting and marching, but the time was not wasted. The Division set to work on the Roman Road with pick and shovel and gunpowder and in the three days made it passable for 60-pounder guns from Berfilyah to Biddu.

On the 22nd the 75th Division crossed our front at Biddu, about two miles away, and that night they took the Hill Mizpah and the Mosque of Nebi Samwil with the bayonet. This created a very sharp salient in the enemy's line defending Jerusalem and its northern exit on the west. The Turk held firmly to his positions north-east and south of this wedge, and counter-attacked Nebi Samwil with vigour. On the 24th the 52nd Division tried to deepen and lengthen the salient, thrusting it right across the Jerusalem road. The plan was that the 155th Brigade should capture El Jib and Nebala, and, that being done, the 156th should attack Kulundia, establishing a defensive flank to the north, while the 157th Brigade pushed right across the road and carried Er Ram. Our line of advance was to be round the southern face of Nebi Samwil, but heavy machine-gun fire from a Turkish position at Beit Iksa prevented this. The route was changed and we kept close under the north-western slopes of the ridge. The worst part of the day was the moving across the open valley to the shelter of the Nebi Samwil ridge. The enemy had guns at Beitunia and at Lifta and behind El Jib, and he did not spare his gunners that day. Fortunately for us he used mostly percussion shrapnel and his percentage of duds was high. At 16.25 the advance was abandoned as the attacks of both the other brigades were held up, and the Battalion was ordered to assist the 155th which was attacking El Jib and Nebala. This attack was not proceeded with and at 21.30 the



BEREYLA.





Brigade took up an outpost line from Beit Izza to Khurbet Neda.

The position was the crest of a slight ridge running across the south of the long valley in front of El Jib, and distant some 3000 yards from that town. By day the companies withdrew into the bivouac area on the reverse slope of the hill, leaving observation posts well supplied with machine and Lewis guns on the ridge. A mountain battery had taken up its quarters close to our transport lines, and the enemy's search for it made us acutely uncomfortable. On the 27th November he shelled the bivouac area heavily, killing two men and wounding the Adjutant, Lieut. L. H. Watson, and eight others. That night the 21st and 23rd London of the 60th Division arrived to take over, and the Battalion moved back through Biddu and Kubeibeh to a rest area below Beit Anan, where No. 1 company had spent such a terrible night on the 20th. Rumours of rest and reserve, of letters and cigarettes, were current. A liberal rum ration added cheerfulness and the Battalion settled down to await relief by a brigade of the 74th Division. Then a long march back and a month of rest and food and sleep would make the men fit for anything.

That relief never came. Our line at the time ran from north of Jaffa, through El Yehudiyeh, Deir Tureif, and Beit Ur El Tahta to Nebi Samwil, where it was swung back almost to Saris, and the enemy threw all his reserves from Damascus against it in a last attempt to save Jerusalem. He made his effort at Tahta, where the town and its prolonged ridge to Khurbet Hellabi were held by the Yeomanry, who proved unequal to the strain. Fortunately the 4th Australian Light Horse got up after a day's hard riding and stopped the gap. They were in no condition for a prolonged defence, and on the night of the 29th the battle-worn 52nd Division was again taking over the work of danger. The 5th occupied the line from the village of Tahta to the ruins at Hellabi

with No. 2 company, under Captain Morrison, on the right and No. 1, commanded by Captain N. R. Campbell, who had returned from D.H.Q. for duty, on the left.

The ridge was about 1400 feet high, covered with rocky out-croppings and fell sheer away to the valley below ; the same valley which saw the slaughter of the Amorites that day when Joshua stayed the sun's going down. The enemy held the ridges across the valley and from them directed an accurately ranged machine-gun fire in enfilade. No trenches could be dug. On the left was a short sangar or breastwork of stones, which afforded both protection and cohesion of forces, but between that and the village the men sheltered behind rocks and in the natural depressions of the ground, thereby making a line which it was very difficult to keep intact. The Battalion had taken over from the Australians by 01.00 and at 03.00 the enemy began his attack. A succession of bombing rushes came up the hill and engaged the whole line. These were repulsed by bomb and rifle fire but not without loss. On the left, Bloody Post, a little in advance of the sangar, took its toll of the defenders. Captain Campbell was hit, Lieut. M'Lellan was killed instantaneously by a bullet, Lieut. Pitchford got a bomb splinter through his steel helmet, and No. 1 company was left with one officer. The fighting was not so heavy on the right but at six o'clock a strong and concerted attack developed on the whole Battalion front, and, with bomb and bayonet, forced back the right of No. 1, making a breach at the junction of the companies. The position was dangerous in the extreme but the men fought stubbornly and Major Neilson with Headquarters Company restored the line by a bayonet charge. Dawn came and the front held firm. In the last attack 2nd Lieut. C. T. Price of No. 2 company had been killed and Lieuts. J. S. Agnew and Gilchrist wounded. The casualties in the ranks were thirteen killed and twenty-two wounded, amongst them C.S.M. Milne of

“ B ” Company and Sergt. Black of “ A ” Company, both serious losses to the battalion.

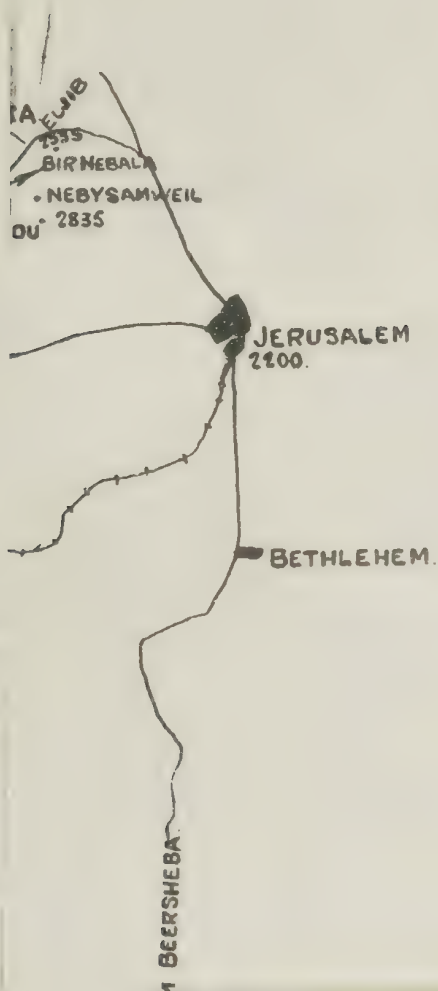
All day the enemy was quiet but night brought renewed activity. The Brigadier had given Colonel Morrison a company of the 5th A. & S.H. for use in the line, which, with a company of the 5th K.O.S.B.'s and an adequate supply of trench-mortars and artillery support, gave greater hope of security. Just after midnight a general attack of no great weight commenced, but the enemy did not push it home, although the steepness of the sides of the valley prevented the full effect of our artillery fire, and the machine-guns posted in Tahta and firing up the valley made little impression. Soon after 02.00 the enemy attack forced back the right of the line and Colonel Morrison had to throw in the Brigade Reserve Company of the Argylls which the Brigadier had authorised him to use. They recovered the crest of the ridge without opposition or casualty. The enemy's attacks were half-hearted and by dawn had ceased entirely. During the night Lieut. Sillars was killed, and Captain Moir and Lieut. Girvan wounded, the total casualties being six killed and sixteen wounded. Next night the 1st Royal Irish of the 10th Division relieved us and the Battalion went into well-earned rest.

On the 7th November the Battalion marched out from Regent's Park with 29 officers and 699 men. By the 1st of December it had lost 25 officers and 368 men, more than half its total strength. In the three weeks the men had not ceased from fighting and marching. They had been often on half rations, without tobacco or home mail, never sufficiently clad and without any real rest or sleep. The fighting had been mainly night attacks, over unknown and unseen ground, to positions which had to be located by the enemy's fire. Nothing tries troops like fighting in pitch blackness. Every man is a law unto himself and the only things that tell are grit and discipline. The Battalion might be weary



and footsore, hungry and tired, battle-weary and nerve-wrecked, yet the men always had that little reserve of heart left which lifted them through the most trying day or the most deadly night.

The month of November, 1917, marked a great change in the Battalion. The good days of Sinai, when war meant only an enemy aeroplane in the grey morning, were gone. Then we knew that to-morrow would be like to-day and that there would be no gaps in the ranks when next the earth swung into the morning sunlight. But November tore old associations to shreds. We left Major Findlay and Lieuts. Townsend and Scott beyond the pleasant orange-groves of Herbieh, sleeping among old comrades on the bare ridges of Sineid. Captain Buchanan left us on the road to Emmaus. Lieuts. M'Lellan and Price and Sillars lay on the rocky hill-top of Beth-horon. With them a goodly company of non-commissioned officers and men, who marched with us and drilled with us and fought with us and died gamely with their faces to the enemy.





## CHAPTER XIII

### FROM TAHTA TO THE AUJA.

Two companies, one of the Royal Irish Regiment and one of the 7th Dublin Fusiliers, arrived at 10 p.m. on the 1st of December to relieve us, and about 11 p.m. 7 officers and 320 N.C.O.'s and men, all that now remained of the Battalion, turned their backs on Tahta. It was with mixed feelings that we moved off in the pitch darkness : regret for the many good fellows who had lost their lives in the last two days : thankfulness that we ourselves had escaped : joy that at length there was a prospect of a few days' absence from the enemy's attentions : and hope (vain, it must be admitted) that we were going to get a rest.

Marching by easy stages, we reached Ramleh about midday on the 3rd. On arrival our hopes of a rest were at once fulfilled. We were told that we were moving in three days' time, and that meantime we had to re-equip and re-organise. Consequently we spent most of our time doing kit inspections and issuing equipment. Our condition at this time was not enviable. We had left Gaza on 7th November in drill clothing, carrying packs, haversacks, and gas-masks. It was soon discovered, however, that we had far too much luggage, and the packs were dumped next day, and the gas-masks two days later. We had now been touring the country, with frequent opposition from the enemy, for nearly a month with nothing more than what we could carry in our haversacks. Most of our boots were



like those you sometimes see washed up by the tide on the seashore, and in many cases the sole and upper had parted company, and could be persuaded to bear with one another a little longer only by a skilful, if highly unauthorised, use of a puttee. We had little or nothing except what we were wearing, and that was not at all suitable for the cold we were now experiencing.

Our three days were, therefore, busy ones. We were issued with serge clothing, greatcoats, socks, and shirts and boots, but not nearly as much as we would have liked.

When we had turned east at Ramleh to assist in the downfall of Jerusalem, the cavalry, moving along the coast, had occupied Jaffa. One of the Divisions in our rear had followed them, and a line had been taken up on the north bank of the River Auja, covering the town. These dispositions had not met with the approval of the Turks, and they had made themselves most objectionable and driven our troops back to the south bank of the river. This left Jaffa within shell-fire, and it was necessary that we should recover the north bank and form a bridgehead. This little job was to be entrusted to the 52nd Division.

We moved to Selmeh on 6th December, and bivouacked in a ploughed field. The rain came on just about the time we arrived, but fortunately we were able to get our bivouacs erected before we got very wet. It rained, however, all that night and all next day, and as no one could remain in his bivouac the whole time, everyone got thoroughly soaked. The following day broke with no signs of clearing. No description of the scene is possible. Picture a very large ploughed field, saturated with water, which collects in pools in every hole. Add four battalions soaked to the skin. Some men are crouching beneath the shelter of canvas bivouacs, which no longer keep out the rain: others are wandering about trying to get warm, and they sink over their boots in mud at every step they take. Everyone

looks thoroughly depressed and miserable. Battalion Headquarters have selected the side of a slight hollow for their bivouacs, and a raging stream has formed in the depression, which gradually rises until it is over the floor of the bivouacs. The only sign of relief is the Doctor patiently fishing for his field boots in the stream. It is amusing to recall now, but will those who experienced it ever forget it.

It cleared from wet to showery on the morning of the 9th, and someone discovered some sandy soil on the other side of the village, where even if it continued to rain the water would not lie, and to this we proceeded in the afternoon. It was a queer procession, as we carried everything, and our coats and blankets were too wet to roll and had to be carried over our arms. We looked more like a gang of Russian refugees on the trek in a film drama, than a part of the British army.

The next two or three days were fortunately dry, though bitterly cold, and we were able to get our things dried, and our rifles and equipment cleaned. We remained in this area for a week, but little can be recorded of our doings. The battle of the Auja was approaching, and expectancy was in the air. Training was carried on for two or three hours daily, and all the officers reconnoitred the river and the Turkish positions beyond.

The river Auja is a winding stream, some 30 to 40 yards in width, and varying in depth very largely according to the season of the year. It was only the three or four miles before it entered the sea that concerned us, and the Turks had taken good care to destroy all the bridges, except a stone one near Khurbet Hadra, and this one was naturally strongly guarded. At the mouth of the river there was a ford, but its exact position was doubtful, and very little was known of its practicability for troops. Some said it was 18 inches deep, others 4 feet.

The enemy were occupying trenches on the north side of

the river. The ground was marshy near the bank of the stream, except for a narrow strip of sand about half a mile in breadth which ran along the seashore. The trenches in the marshy ground had been flooded out by the recent rains and it was very doubtful whether they were occupied or not. On the shore there was a post just at the enemy's end of the ford. There was also a large work in a sand ridge about 1000 yards beyond the river, and here individuals could be seen working daily. Beyond this again, Tel er Rekkit, a prominent sand hill, appeared to be strongly held, and there were innumerable small trenches covering it. Farther inland the enemy occupied Shiek Muannis, a prominent village which commanded the whole river.

The problem was how to get at the enemy. To find out his exact dispositions and strength was a matter of considerable difficulty, as most of our reconnaissance had to be done from our own side of the river. Colonel Anderson of 6th H.L.I., accompanied by Lieut. Hills, swam across the river at the mouth, located the ford, and brought back valuable information about its practicability, but beyond this our information was confined to what we could see for ourselves, and what our aeroplanes brought back. It was sufficient, however, to let us judge that, provided we could land a sufficient force on the other bank, we could give a very good account of ourselves.

The plan of operations was one of the most complicated we have ever had the pleasure of carrying through. At 8 p.m. on the night fixed for the operations, the 7th H.L.I. was to cross the river at Mawson's Post, first on rafts, and as soon as a bridge could be constructed, on it. This crossing, which was about 1000 yards from the mouth of the river, would land them in the marshy ground which it was hoped was not held, and here the Battalion was to assemble. So soon as it was ready, one company was to move down the river to the ford and drive the enemy out of his post there.



The remaining companies were to advance on the large work about 1000 yards from the river and capture and consolidate it. Meanwhile the other two brigades of the Division were to cross the Auja higher up, and occupy Shiek Muannis and the ground round Khurbet Hadra. The operation was to be covered by a barrage from the time the troops started to advance from the far side of the river, but the actual crossing was to be carried out in absolute silence. At 12.10 a.m., by which time all the first objectives were to be in our hands, the 6th H.L.I. and the 5th A. & S.H. were to cross the ford, and advancing along the shore, taking all the Turkish positions on the way, to take Tel er Rekket.

Such a scheme required careful preparation. It depended very largely on secrecy for its success, and, to get all the material necessary for the bridges down to the river bank in readiness for the night, required careful management. Again, with so many units carrying out almost independent actions on a dark night, a very small error in the time table or routes of the various battalions might have led to disaster.

All was ready for the night of 20th December, and the night before, we left our bivouac area at Selmeh, and moved to a concentration area near Summeil. Here in the orange groves the whole Brigade was to be assembled in readiness for the following night. For its purpose the position chosen was ideal, but it could hardly be called the acme of comfort. Our job for the next 24 hours was to crouch beneath the trees in case of disclosing our presence to any inquisitive enemy plane. As it was, it rained heavily on the 19th and, after a very heavy march in the dark, we reached our new quarters about ten o'clock. The groves were separated by a narrow lane, and here the entire transport of the Brigade had contrived to get itself into the most inextricable confusion. There was no room for two limbers to pass abreast, and they could be turned only by separating the two halves and turning one at a time.



The Battalion was quickly stowed away, but it was 4.30 a.m., just at dawn, before the last limber was unloaded and sent away. The scene of limbers hopelessly locked, plunging mules, serenely indifferent camels, cursing transport drivers, and dripping unloading parties who could not find the limbers they were to unload, will not be soon forgotten by those who were there.

It cleared on the morning of the 20th, but our lot was not enviable. We were all soaked to the skin, and it was quite impossible to light a fire or get anything hot to eat or drink. We could only sit beneath the dripping trees and shiver. Even the best oranges we had yet come across did not appeal to us, they seemed so cold. Blankets, packs and bivouac sheets were dumped in the morning, and the rest of the day was spent in cleaning rifles and ammunition and trying to get warm.

Our rôle in the evening's work was that of Brigade reserve. "A" and "D" Companies, under Captain Morrison, were told off to act as immediate support to the 7th H.L.I., if they found any difficulty in getting their objectives, and these two companies moved off at 8 p.m., followed by 6th H.L.I. and 5th A. & S.H., the remainder of the Battalion bringing up the rear. The preliminary move was to a position of readiness under the cliffs on the shore about 800 yards from the ford.

The whole operations were carried out with complete success, the only hitch being a slight delay in getting some of the bridges across higher up the river, which caused the barrage at the last moment to be postponed for half an hour. The rains of the night before had probably lulled the enemy into a sense of false security. The trenches in the marshy ground were unoccupied, and he certainly was not expecting us in other places, as in more than one place prisoners were taken in their night raiment before they had time to arm themselves. The river had risen with the rains, and at

the ford the water was over the waists of those who crossed.

At 2 a.m. we received word from Brigade that our services would not be required, and that we had better make ourselves comfortable for the night, a matter of no small difficulty, as it was piercing cold and we were lightly equipped for fighting. Thus ended one of the most brilliantly planned and executed actions we ever took part in. In effect it was an easy and cheap victory, but how difficult and costly it might have been is not hard to imagine. In the first place, it was entirely a night show, and the distances to be traversed were considerable: to that add the fact that the objectives were much scattered, and no reconnaissance was possible except from our own side of the river. Secondly, preparation of the smallest detail was necessary, and a very large amount of material was required to carry out the operations, and yet absolute secrecy was a vital necessity for the success of the plan. It would have been a comparatively simple matter to prevent our crossing, or at least to have made it a very costly and uncomfortable proceeding, had it been suspected, but its very boldness carried it through. The Turks, even if they did observe some preparations, probably thought that we would never attempt to cross the river.

In order to make the bridgehead in front of Jaffa more secure, it was determined to push forward another three or four miles, and about 11 a.m. on the 21st we received orders to cross the Auja, and move our bivouac to Tel er Rekkit. This we did in the afternoon, crossing by a bridge about half a mile from the river mouth. We arrived at the new area about 4.30 p.m. and were glad of a good night's rest.

The next morning the 21st Corps was ordered to advance along its whole front, and each Brigade of the 52nd Division had to take certain successive positions. The final objectives of the 157th Brigade were on a series of ridges about three and a half miles in front. Our Battalion, in order to protect

the left flank of the 156th Brigade, was ordered to capture and hold a ridge on our right flank, to leave a garrison there, and to rejoin our own Brigade as reserve.

Early on the morning of the 22nd a reconnaissance of the ground over which the Battalion was to advance was made from El Makras, but it was very difficult to locate our objective exactly. At 9.35 the signal for our advance, the 156th Brigade deploying from Muannis, was observed, and we moved off in artillery formation, "B" and "C" Companies in front, "D" and "A" in support. During the advance it was observed that the left of the 156th Brigade would cross our front, so a slight change of direction was made. We reached our objective about 11 o'clock, and "B" Company was ordered to garrison it, while the remainder of the Battalion reassembled preparatory to rejoining our own Brigade as reserve.

This was one of our bloodless victories. On our own front a few of the enemy were seen, but they were apparently only rear parties and were most unwilling to fight. They stood on a skyline and fired a few rounds at us, but the range was extreme, and only three of us managed to collect any lead and they were all very slightly wounded. After that the enemy disappeared and was seen no more. On our right, in front of the other Brigades, there was a little shelling, but not sufficient to do much damage, or prevent them from obtaining their objectives.

By one o'clock we were in reserve behind the centre of our own Brigade, but we were not required. The 6th H.L.I. occupied El Haram, a prominent white mosque near the shore, without difficulty. The 5th A. & S.H. passed through Jelil, a native village which had been set on fire in the morning, without opposition. The 7th H.L.I. prolonged the line inland, and joined up with the 156th Brigade on our right.

By three o'clock in the afternoon the whole affair was over, and we were ordered to bivouac near Jelil. Considerable



JAFFA FROM THE SHORE.





difficulty was experienced in selecting a bivouac area which would not be in view of the enemy from one position or another, but one was at length found, although there were some readjustments to be made the next day.

That night we learned that our commanding officer, Colonel Morrison, had died in hospital at Alexandria. He had not been feeling very well after our sojourn in the hills, and while we were at Selmeh had taken a chill, and the medical officer had persuaded him on 12th December to go to the Field Ambulance at Jaffa for a short rest. All who knew him know how unwillingly he would go, and it was only after innumerable promises that he would not be sent farther than Jaffa that he consented. He got no better, however, at Jaffa, and was finally persuaded to go to Alexandria, where he died on the night of 22nd December of a slight attack of dysentery accompanied by pneumonia. It was hard to believe the Colonel had died; he was the outstanding figure in our Division, a Colonel under whom it was an honour to serve. He had trained us in Scotland before and after the outbreak of war; he had commanded us in Gallipoli and in the desert. His love of his Battalion had kept him from going on home leave, and now, after having brought us through the never to be forgotten advance from Gaza to the Auja, and having been in the last engagement of any consequence we had in Palestine, the rigours of the campaign had killed him. One lost many friends and gallant soldiers in the course of the campaign, but the blank left by the death of our honoured Colonel seemed different to all others.

## CHAPTER XIV

### LAST DAYS IN PALESTINE. NORTH OF JAFFA.

THE operations of 22nd December brought to an end our fighting in Palestine. Jaffa was now well protected from everything, except perhaps aeroplanes, and we now settled down to enjoy a rest after our labours. In any case the force of our blow was spent. In little over a month the entire army had moved forward nearly 100 miles. Beer-sheba, Jaffa, and above all Jerusalem, were in our hands.

The cost had been heavy to us, but considerably heavier to the enemy. We were still full of fight, technically known as the "offensive spirit," and could have gone on considerably farther, but our communications were becoming precarious. The railway was being pushed on as fast as possible, and by this time was near Mejdal, though Deir Sineid was still railhead. A narrow gauge railway ran from Deir Sineid to Ludd, and this we had put in order and were working with captured engines and rolling stock. Neither line, however, was entirely satisfactory. In dry weather all went well, but when it rained the communications were invariably cut.

A spell of very bad weather now broke, and for three days it rained continuously and very heavily. The narrow gauge railway was flooded and ceased to be of any service until after the New Year. On the broad gauge line, the railway crossing over the Wadi Ghuzzeh was washed away, as was also a bridge over the Wadi Hesi between Gaza and Deir

Sineid, and from Deir Sineid onwards the line was flooded. Thus for three days the whole country north of Gaza was cut off. Fortunately large dumps of foodstuffs had been formed at Deir Sineid and Ramleh, and by means of camel transport, for every other means of transport broke down at one time or other, we were able to be fed.

Christmas Day was miserably wet, and owing to the conditions we were lucky to get a full ration of bully and biscuits for our Christmas dinner. Mails were out of the question until the railway was in full working order, and after all it was probably better to have a complete ration than a dilapidated and rain-soaked parcel, which might or might not contain food. We managed to get about £11 worth of canteen stores from the Brigade, not very much to go round the Battalion, but rather a feat considering the adverse conditions.

The Divisional Christmas Card was a memo dealing with the scheme of defence and the digging of a permanent line. This foretold much labour for us in the near future, but as we did not hear of it at once it did not disturb our festivities.

On 26th December the weather cleared, but from now onwards it was always bitterly cold. Nothing will persuade those who have not been in the East that we were not continually luxuriating in the rays of a blazing sun and that the skies were always cloudless. The months of December, January and February, spent under the doubtful shelter of two waterproof (?) sheets, would disillusion them ; and it is a very serious question whether they would apply the term "luxuriating" to the weather in May, June, and July.

There is very little to be said about our sojourn in this part. A draft of 107 arrived on the 26th December, and the companies which had been organised into two platoons since the fight for the ridge at the Wadi Hesi, expanded again into four platoons. On the 28th we heard the plans of a proposed raid, but that was postponed, and finally cancelled altogether



the next day. On the 30th we commenced digging support trenches for the firing line battalions, and we were digging daily until we relieved the 7th H.L.I. on the morning of 6th January.

The line consisted of two valleys with a long ridge running towards the enemy in the centre. "D" Company took the right of the sector in Lyle's Post, a knoll in the middle of the right valley, which was completely commanded by Pimple Hill some 800 yards in front. This was a high peak, its name describes its shape, which was held by day with an observation post, but was unoccupied by night. It was rather an uncomfortable spot, because, while it commanded a magnificent view of the surrounding country, the Turks knew we had a post on it, and it came in for periodic shelling.

"A" Company held the main ridge, or Moore Ridge as it was called in compliment to our Brigade commander. "B" Company held a knoll in the left valley, known as Christmas Hill from the fact that it was occupied in a readjustment of the line on that day. This was an extremely hot spot, and was continually getting more than its fair share of shelling. On 7th January Lieut. Gardiner, who had joined us on 20th December, and one man were killed by a shell at this post while reconnoitring.

Our life in the line was very uneventful. The digging of the posts was not nearly completed, and we were continually digging and wiring. In this we had the assistance of the 7th H.L.I. Our two main difficulties were in getting the trenches to stand and drainage. The Lyle's Post and Christmas Hill trenches were in sand, and required almost complete revetting. The Moore Ridge trenches were in clay, and every time it rained they had to be bailed out with buckets. A few days in this part of the line made us all very efficient sanitary engineers; if it did not teach us where to dig drains, it certainly taught us where not to dig them.

A beautiful cookhouse was dug at Lyle's Post, partly to conceal the fire and partly to give the cooks shelter from the daily heat. The night after it was completed with much labour it rained ; in the morning the degtchies, which had been filled the night before ready for breakfast, were under three feet of water and mud. After much vain fishing with bivouac sticks, the degtchies were rescued, but it was only after several hours' drain-digging that the cookhouse was cleared of water and the bacon discovered in a far corner.

On the night of 21st January we were relieved by 7th H.L.I. and retired to their quarters farther back. We remained in reserve till 5th February, the specialists doing training and the remainder of the Battalion furnishing working parties to 7th H.L.I. During this period we were strengthened with the addition of 14 officers and 283 other ranks. Of these, 8 officers and 170 other ranks had been casualties in the recent operations, and the remainder were fresh from the United Kingdom. About this time the native village of Jelil yielded to our acquisitive pioneers an upholstered sofa and arm-chair. These became very precious in the eyes of headquarters mess and wherever we went they went also, excepting when they were lent to a relieving unit, the terms as to return being carefully arranged. Later on, when the sunny weather returned, the sight of officers lounging at ease in comfortable pieces of European furniture brought envy into the minds of those who sat on benches or sand bags. But take comfort when you can get it is a good maxim for soldiers.

On 5th February we again took over from 7th H.L.I., and for the first four days in the line it poured continuously. "C" Company on Moore Ridge were flooded out of their trenches by the 7th, and work of any kind was quite impossible. On the night of the 8th there was a dry blink, and good progress was made in baling out and draining the trenches but the 9th was again wet, and it did not finally

clear till the morning of the 10th. During this tour in the line there was nothing to note except the weather, and the less said about it the better. The enemy were much quieter, and there was very little shelling. Two Turks were taken prisoner outside the wire at Christmas Hill on the morning of the 7th, and a deserter was brought in by "C" Company on the 10th.

The 4th R.S.F. relieved us on the night of the 14th, and we went back for our long promised rest at Sarona, arriving there at 4 a.m. on the 15th. The Commanding Officer, Intelligence Officer, and the four company commanders, remained behind after the relief, and carried out a skeleton withdrawal scheme the next day.

Our sojourn in Sarona was the first time many of us had been under a roof since we left Southampton on 22nd May, 1915. Consequently, in order to celebrate the occasion we all developed colds. The original programme decreed that we were to spend a fortnight here, but owing to the visit of H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught, the period was extended to over a month. The time was spent in much needed training, even more needed disinfecting, and recreation. At this time we got the first chance of doing some musketry we had had for over six months.

Sarona had been a German colony and the village was well planned and clean. All the streets were lined with trees and a more pleasant spot would have been difficult to find. By order of the G.O.C. Division we held no afternoon parades. Some very fine football matches were played, there was Jaffa to visit, and the concert party as usual were ready with performances in the Town Hall. The sunny weather returned and with it a profusion of wild flowers. The country to the east of the village was most attractive to explore—cactus lanes, orange groves, olive and almond plantations, the latter a mass of blossom, and from the hills one viewed almost unsurpassed landscapes of the Judean



Hills rising behind the Crusaders' great castle at Ras el Ain.

The Germans had seen to it that the village had its wine factory and, there, red wine of various qualities (mostly poor stuff) and cognac (wholly bad) had been made. The sappers converted the factory into baths, and in parties of thirty the men had hot baths, each man having an old wine vat to himself.

On the 21st February we got a draft of 17 new officers, seven of whom were sent about a fortnight later to the 5th A. & S.H. At the end of February our strength was 49 officers and 1043 other ranks, of whom 2 officers and 80 other ranks were detached.

On 18th March H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught visited Sarona in order to present decorations to the 52nd Division. The following officers, N.C.O.'s and men of the Battalion received their medals on this occasion. D.S.O.—Major D. E. Brand: M.C.—Captains T. A. Fyfe and E. Mullen (7th, attached 5th H.L.I.), and Lieut. Sweet: D.C.M.—C.S.M. J. Coubrough, C.S.M. J. J. Twentyman, Sergt J. Bryden, and Sergt. W. Sykes: M.M.—Sergt. D. Smith, Sergt. R. Lyon, and Pte. J. Drummond.

On the same day the social event of the Sarona season took place in the form of a fancy dress ball given by our officers to all other officers within reach. Jaffa was ransacked for costumes. According to the invitation the guests arrived in pairs, one as a lady, the other representing his own sex. They were received by Major Craufurd as a stately omda, and by the second in command as a " bint " with head-dress, yasmak gown and beribboned pyjama trousers. There was a march past General Hill, who decided after some difficulty that the Quartermaster and Mullen were the best dressed couple, the former as a tin of Ideal Milk, the latter as an extremely pretty girl dressed in much flowing white. But there were many other striking costumes,



Girot, in shabby black tail coat and life-like nose made of bread, representing one of the race that hopes to return to Palestine. Sweet, a monkey (tail and all) ; J. W. Parr lived again one of his days as an A.B. at the Crystal Palace. Colonel Gibbons of the 7th and his Adjutant, Blair, were not recognised for long in their coster costumes. Colonel Anderson of the 6th arrived as a pirate mounted on a donkey. His fierce mustachios, jersey, boots and cutlass made him a terrifying sight, while his Adjutant, Speirs, made a most fascinating young girl, with whom even Generals showed a disposition to fall in love. The Flying Corps were of course in evidence and the squadron stationed behind us turned out en masse, including their energetic juggler. There were young ladies, old ladies, ladies of the harem and of the ballet ; there were all races and colours. Pipers played the reels, an orchestra of eight from the Divisional band, with Pte. Williams at the piano, the other dance music. A well-stocked buffet did a roaring trade. And we all thought there had never been a night like it.

On the night of 19th March our Brigade relieved the 156th Brigade in the right sector of the line. We took over from 7th S.R. and were again in support to the 7th H.L.I. to begin with. The weather was now more perfect and the country at its best. Spring in Palestine is wonderful ; in addition to the wealth of flowers, the oranges and lemons were delicious. Part of the line passed in front of a very large grove and there our limbers could fill up in a few minutes with oranges such as we had never tasted before. The Turk we saw little of ; he was digging in, but some miles away, and his night patrols never came near us. We spent quite a pleasant fortnight training, with only an occasional work party at night. On the 31st of March Lieut. Legate left with a small advance party to sort kits at Kantara.



IN SARONA.



## CHAPTER XV

### FRANCE

ON 10th April, 1918, we embarked on *H.M.T. Omrah* at Alexandria and set sail for France on the following day. Many were sorry to leave the Palestine front, where in between the battles the life was often very pleasant, and no regimental officer was ever heard to say leave in Cairo, Alexandria or Luxor was unpleasant; but going to France meant a chance of home leave, and it was a change. We were not so sure of home leave being open, however, as the German spring offensive was still going strong, the first word of which we got from a patrol bringing in a written message by the Turks giving an accurate report of its initial success. The Division, less the gunners who remained in Palestine, came over in a convoy of seven ships escorted by Japanese T.B.D.'s. The voyage was without incident, for which we were thankful, as those who had not been already torpedoed in the Mediterranean did not wish to be, and those who had been were not anxious for a second performance. So Marseilles was reached safely on the 17th, the good ship *Omrah* leading the convoy up the channel.

Two days at Marseilles gave one the chance of seeing the place, finding Cox's, and discovering that the restaurants there were much more expensive than in Cairo. On the 19th we entrained, in spite of an R.T.O., and started for the north to a destination unknown. We knew little of the situation and the reports picked up on the journey were not very



encouraging. Once we were told we were for Versailles, to defend Paris we surmised ; however, Versailles was passed, and then we were told Amiens had fallen. Still, when the train slowly crawled through that city we knew things were not so bad. It was a cold journey, but the railway people were obliging, and no matter how late the train got, when we had a halt for a meal they gave us enough time. It was our introduction to the amazing system of troop transport by rail in France.

In the end we arrived at Noyelle-sur-Mer, the " mer " was out of sight, but a march of five miles or so brought us on the 22nd to St. Valery Sur Somme, which is on the sea. There we went into billets, under command of Lieut.-Colonel Neilson who rejoined from home leave.

Having spent some time at Ludd, handing in every article of ordnance stores we possessed, except the clothes and equipment on the man, we now were kept busy collecting it all again. In five days we had everything, horses, limbers, field-cookers, Lewis guns, etc., the horses comparing unfavourably with those left behind. The establishment for France was much the same as for Palestine, the main difference being in the transport supplied for Lewis guns and their ammunition. In France no special mules are supplied ; the whole load is carried in one limber per company. This sounds simpler than a mixture of limbers and pack animals, but experience in Palestine had proved the value of pack animals, and subsequent experiences in France proved the danger of all the eggs in one basket, or the limber method of carrying these guns.

Life at St. Valery was rather pleasant, though it was very cold and much depended on the billet. Our cooks were introduced to the mysteries of the omelette, and they learned by experience that these delicacies, even though by being kept in an oven for an hour or so remain hot, yet their virtue departs. A group of the officers was taken by the

local photographer and one appreciated then how many new faces there were.

Whenever we had got our ordnance issues distributed we entrained for Bourguette on the 28th and from there marched a few miles to a hutment camp at La Lacque. Here we lived comfortably for a little in what had been a fine camp, but it had rather a deserted air, as the German offensive had brought it rather near the line, though that was some six miles away. Our tactical job was to look after a third line, and this line was studied by the companies. A water-logged, uninteresting part it was.

There was much talk about defence in depth, which we in our innocence had thought had been universally adopted since the famous defence of Verdun by the French in 1916. The last side show at La Lacque was a lecture and demonstration given by Colonel Campbell in bayonet fighting. Most regiments in France had heard it, and we were lucky to have the chance. Apart from the lecture itself, it was a striking lesson of how to talk to troops. One of his stories was of a Jock after a charge finding himself opposite a large Hun who put up his hands saying, "Me never fight, me shoot minnenwerfer." "Oh, you do, do you," was the reply, "you're the —— I've been looking for for two years." Followed by the necessary action.

When at La Lacque we received our gas training. It took the form of a route march to a place six miles away, where the whole Division being assembled as at sports, various demonstrations were made, including the firing of projectors—tabloid gas training.

Nothing more exciting happened. The Bosche offensive was over, and entraining at Aire on 7th May we were taken to Maroeuil and marched to Hills Camp in the back area behind Vimy ridge. We took over from the 54th Canadian Infantry on the night 7/8th May in the third line, which included the village of Vimy. The whole area from Neuville

St. Vaast, across the ridge and down to the village, was a depressing sight ; villages and fields ravaged by the fire, not of one, but of many battles. Neuville St. Vaast had once been a town of some size ; now one looked in vain for even one standing wall. There was more of Vimy left and under collapsed houses were deep dug-outs of German origin. At this time the army of Prince Ruprecht was somewhere opposite and an attack was expected. In fact some details were given. There was to be a three hours' preparatory bombardment, commencing at 22.30 on the 9th, but it was merely one of these periodical alarms that one had got fairly well accustomed to. It is a curious fact that as a rule when in the line one does not expect to be attacked, hence when anything was expected the wires were busy with "vigilance," etc. About this time leave opened and many a well-earned leave was granted.

On night of 14/15th we took over part of front line from 7th H.L.I. Having been regularly supplied in the East with all the military publications, including books of plans of beautiful trenches, we were surprised to find what a difference there was between theory and practice. The explanation was fairly simple, however, as each battalion had a few miles of trenches in their sector and it was impossible to have them all dug to a plan. Still, as had always been our lot, there was any amount of digging to be done and we had to get down to it. Night patrols here found little. The Bosche front line was only held by a few posts. Patrolling was found to be very different from Palestine ; there the ground was smooth, except for nullahs, and the stars were always out to guide one, here shell holes threw one's direction out and the stars were rarely seen. The result was that the first patrol was a little late in returning, as it came back the night after it started, having spent a quiet day sitting in a shell hole and noting the route they should have taken home the night before.



To give in detail our life in the Vimy sector would not make interesting reading as it was a quiet time. The enemy shelling was not heavy and was confined to a few favourite spots. At night he sent over a few gas shells, but never in great numbers, and the damage done was trifling. On the other hand, night after night he received thousands of shells of all sizes from our gunners, especially from 6-inch howitzers, and none envied the Bosche.

We were in the line in most parts of the Vimy sector, gradually working our way to the right towards Arras by Willerval and Bailleul. When out of the line the various camps about Neuville St. Vaast and Mont St. Eloy housed us. The latter place received some attention from a high velocity gun, whose shell approached in a most alarming manner. The noise was the worst part as the effects were generally local; but one night a hut containing 2nd L.F.A. personnel was hit and twelve killed and sixteen wounded. A few shells landed on our parade ground but did no damage.

In the course of our wanderings in this part of the line Battalion Headquarters had a spell in the Thelus chalk caves. They are said to have once connected with Mont St. Eloy, some three or four miles away. Now these tunnels are blocked, but they are very extensive and cold; even in the hot weather cardigans had to be worn below. Electricity supplied the light for our one and only globe until it got smashed, when the law of "might" supplied another.

The old German dug-outs in other parts excited our interest, rows of beds in tiers of wooden frames and rabbit wire reminded one of a lodging-house, but the latter type of residence is probably fresher. The beds were delightful for sleeping on, and clean, but one restless sleeper would make the row oscillate in harmony.

At this time we were in the Eighth Corps, and our corps commander, Lieut.-General Hunter Weston, paid us a visit



in July and made a complete tour at a high rate of speed, and finished fresh at the head of an exhausted staff.

One spell out of the line was spent at Villiers au Bois, where some training was expected, as we had had none worth speaking of in France. Instead of that we became the village road sweepers and scavengers and so fitted ourselves for our return to the line.

Lieut. Carmichael, D.S.O., supplied the one thrill in the way of patrols. The two lines near Arleux lay some 600 yards or so apart and the Bosche was very inactive. He did not seem to be so keen on roaming about in the dark as the Turk. One night in July Lieut. Carmichael set out with two battalion scouts, Ptes. Pirie and Kinniburgh, to reconnoitre a part of the Bosche wire. The men were armed in the usual way for those adventures, *i.e.* with bayonet and a few bombs only and dressed in burberry suits, which made them look more like deep-sea divers than soldiers. A covering party accompanied them part of the way and took up a position; the three had examined the wire and were commencing to withdraw when they were attacked. As the sergeant left in charge of the covering party reported, the first he heard was a revolver shot followed by a "D—— it." This relapse to the colloquial we afterwards heard was owing to a jamb in the revolver. Pirie was seized by the throat by a Hun, but he put his bayonet through his assailant's neck and left it there; the Bosche fell dead as Kinniburgh came to the rescue. A few bombs into the enemy patrol completed their demoralisation and the three got back safely, though Carmichael got detached and came in through another unit's lines, getting a couple of bombs to himself from one of our posts; however, as a miss is as good as a mile, no harm was done. While the patrol were having their little engagement, a stretcher bearer, Pte. J. Lamb, thought he might be of use, so on his own left the covering party to see if anyone was wounded. Nearly stumbling into a shell hole where

six Germans were lying quietly, he halted on the edge, not knowing whether he was going to be shot or taken prisoner ; then they said, " we your friends," at which he hurled his stretcher at them and bolted back, falling immediately into another shell hole, but the Bosche remained talking excitedly and Pte. Lamb returned safely.

About this time a number of gas beam attacks were made from our line. These were from the infantry point of view a great advance on the old system, which meant man-handling innumerable heavy gas cylinders up the trench system to the firing-line. By the new system a light railway was run forward to the front line and all the infantry had to do was to push the bogeys forward. When all were in position the gas expert turned a handle and a poisonous mixture hissed off towards the enemy. What casualties, if any, were inflicted we never heard ; we certainly had a number as the result of enemy retaliation by shell fire.

Towards the end of July we moved out of the line and spent ten days at Lozingham, some miles behind Bethune, while there forming part of G.H.Q. Reserve. The weather was good and the training much needed. The grounds of the local chateau had huts in them and there we lived. A charming countryside it was. But these good times could not last very long, so we were soon marching back to the area we had left, bivouacking one night in a large forest near Barlin, the next night at Roelincourt, and the day following in the line again to the right of our last sector. Here we saw the S.O.S. signal go up on our right one night early in August and we had a good view of the pyrotechnics that follow such a signal. It must have been an expensive evening as thousands of rounds fell in barrage, but we never heard if there had been a raid by the enemy ; sometimes these signals are sent up, the reason being " wind up." And one has a certain amount of sympathy for the sentry in a small post in front of the line who makes a mistake. He knows

if an attack is coming he may only have a few seconds in which to act. His rifle is loaded with the S.O.S. grenade and all he has to do to let it off is to press the trigger. All varieties of temperament are represented in these lonely sentries, hence occasionally a mistake is made.

Our experiences of holding the line as it had been since the enemy reached the limit of his advance in Spring, finished on 16th August, when we were relieved by the 8th Division and moved back to Roclincourt, and thence a ten mile march brought us to a camp in a thick wood near the Chateau de la Haie. We now began to suspect something would be doing soon as all surplus baggage was sent to a dump at Aubigny. One may send much to a dump, but little ever seems to be got back. Four days were spent near this chateau and then on 21st August a march was made to a camp at Agnes les Duisans near Arras. Enemy planes were very active at night dropping bombs wherever they thought there was movement, but a thick mist obscured the full moon and we moved with a feeling of security that would have been absent on a clear night. Our own planes at this time were we knew at least as active behind the German lines. In addition, our scouts patrolled above us looking for enemy raiders, and if the latter became caught in the beams of searchlights the scouts soon shot down the heavier machines.

The camp at Agnes les Duisans was conspicuous by its cleanliness and by a most beautiful bathing pool near, rising from numerous springs out of a chalky soil. The pool was clear, cold and deep and set among meadows and trees—a striking contrast to the dusty road.

On the night 22/23rd we moved further south to Bellecourt and could hear that we were approaching the battle area. On the 23rd we moved nearer the line to a rendezvous near Ficheux, arriving about 11 p.m.

At 2 a.m. on the 24th August orders were received for an attack to be made by the Brigade that morning. On the



previous day the 156th Brigade had advanced the line some distance and the general plan of our attack was passing through the 156th Brigade to attack eastwards, finally assaulting and consolidating a portion of the Hindenburg Line front and support system. The attack was to be delivered by ourselves (on the left) and 6th H.L.I. (on the right), the 7th being in reserve. At 4.45 the Battalion moved in artillery formation ("A" and "D" Companies forming the first line, and "B" and "C" the second) to the position of assembly at the railway embankment. This move sounds simple on paper, but at night over unknown country the difficulties may be appreciated by giving the experiences in this early part of the battle of the O.C. "D" Company. Shortly after 3 a.m. he received a message by orderly to report at Headquarters for instructions. His company was lying in an old disused trench, where it had arrived in the dark. The ground all around was broken up with large and old shell holes, covered with grass and weeds and in addition high and low wire entanglements, which alone would have made negotiating this part a difficult task even by daylight. He receives his orders in an old dug-out lit by a flickering candle, and is referred to a map of small scale and told to move his company independently and at once to a rendezvous about 1 or 1½ miles away. There is no time to explain matters fully to his platoon commanders and N.C.O.'s. No one has been within miles of this ground before. The company falls in—into this network of holes and wire—in the dark, and the harassed company commander wonders if it ever can possibly move in any direction at all. Finally, with the aid of a luminous compass, he moves his company in single file in approximately the right direction, arriving finally at the railway embankment.

At 5.30 a.m. the advance was continued, our bombardment opening at 7 a.m., when we came under shell-fire. The river Cojeul was successfully crossed, a river only by



name, and on crossing the sunken road beyond, the companies extended. Soon after Colonel Neilson was severely wounded and Captain Fyfe took command until Captain Parr, the next senior, could be informed. The advance continued to about 300 yards of the wire in front of the first objective. Here it was held up by our own barrage which was falling in some cases behind our front line. This was about 9 a.m. At 9.15 a.m. the right company ("A") was withdrawn about 50 yards to clear our barrage : at the same time small parties of the enemy were seen withdrawing from his front line. At this stage of the attack there was a gap of some 1500 yards between our left and the nearest troops on their outer flank. At 10 a.m. our barrage still fell, entirely from heavy artillery. Captain Fyfe then consulted the O.C. 6th H.L.I. (Colonel James Anderson, D.S.O.) as to the advisability of pushing on through it. They decided to remain in the present position. By this time numerous wires had been sent asking the guns to stop. At 10.30 a.m. Captain Parr took over command. At 11.15 a.m. our heavies stopped and two platoons of "A" Company and two platoons of "D" Company under Captain L. H. Watson advanced against the Hindenburg Line. The wire was exceptionally thick and strong and had not been destroyed by our fire and on it the enemy concentrated heavy machine-gun and trench-mortar fire. Casualties were heavy and at 12.15 p.m. the assaulting platoons, being unable to get through the wire, withdrew to their old line to allow the trench-mortar and machine-gun fire to be neutralised. At 1.15 p.m. the Brigade commander came to Headquarters and an assault with the 6th H.L.I. was arranged to follow a fifteen minute bombardment on the Hindenburg front and support lines. Zero time for the assault was fixed at 3.45 p.m. No bombardment took place till 3.43 p.m. At 3.46 p.m. the same assaulting platoons again advanced. The wire again caused a serious check, but by 5 p.m. was penetrated, but there was

still 300 yards to be traversed before reaching the enemy's front trenches, and when crossing this part continuous trench-mortar and machine-gun fire came from the enemy's left flank, which was not being attacked. A platoon of "C" Company was sent up to prolong the left flank, taking up reserve S.A.A. At 5.30 p.m. the enemy opened a heavy bombardment, but a quarter of an hour later an assault had been made and a footing obtained in the first objective. This was all, however, as there was no support on the left. Touch had been lost on the right and from both sides and the front a counter attack had commenced. This might have been successfully dealt with had casualties not been so heavy. As it was the officers in the trench rightly ordered the men back and the small part of the Hindenburg Line captured was evacuated, a few of our men being unfortunately captured. Only two German prisoners were brought back, but from the nature of the operation to bring back even two was no small achievement. A line was organised as before the assault and at 8 p.m. the line was retired two hundred yards to conform with the line formed on our right. This line consisted mainly of odd shell holes and ditches, a most uncomfortable place, but suitable for meeting the heavy bombardment put down by the enemy between 8 p.m. and 9.30 p.m. and at 4 a.m. next morning. The enemy appeared to be well shaken as our defensive patrols observed no signs of activity in front of his line.

In this operation Sec.-Lieut. E. D. Turner was killed. Lieut. A. H. Malcolm died of wounds, Lieut.-Colonel J. B. Neilson, D.S.O., Captain L. H. Watson, Sec.-Lieut. E. T. Williamson, Sec.-Lieut. C. M. Sanderson, Lieut. J. Girvan, and Lieut. G. S. Barr were wounded, and Captain R. M. Miller, Lieut. J. W. Parr (wounded), and Sec.-Lieut. J. M'Kie were captured. In other ranks 13 were killed, 162 wounded.

On the morning of the 25th Major Brand arrived and took over command, the Battalion lying in the dispositions of

the previous night. All movement was open to direct machine-gun fire, and this, mixed with desultory shelling and a very hot day, was very trying. Low flying enemy planes repeatedly had a good look at us, and at night we were glad to get an order to withdraw to Brigade reserve in a convenient sunken road leading from Henin to St. Leger, "A" and "B" Companies under Captain Fyfe holding Henin Hill on our right until withdrawn at 3 a.m. on the 26th.

Lying in this road gave the companies a chance to pull themselves together, as reorganisation would have been impossible in the exposed place we had just left. Here we had a good example of the effect of one gas shell. Lieut. Cumming and some scouts had been out all day reconnoitring Henin Hill and reporting on the enemies' dispositions. A patrol consisting of a small platoon was sent to relieve him. One shell gassed the whole platoon, but fortunately not badly. still they were utterly unfit for further work and were evacuated.

Going back to the attack on the 24th, Lieut. J. W. Parr was one of the officers who got into the Hindenburg Line. After the decision to withdraw and having seen his few men start for our line he started to make a bolt himself but got hit in the ankle, tumbling into a shell hole on the top of a German who surrendered to him. A conversation was carried on in French, and the German was told to go back to our line and report his position. This the Bosche would not do as there were too many bullets flying about. Later the Germans were seen advancing and Lt. Parr tried to get the German to move into another shell hole in the hope that he himself might not be discovered. This also the German refused, preferring the comparative safety of a hole to the risk of the open. Finally the advancing enemy reached the shell hole and would have bayoneted Lt. Parr had not his prisoner protected him. The friend turned out to be a corporal, carried Lt. Parr's pack back for him and saw him into



hospital and in possession of an unlooted pack—an example of the vicissitudes of war. While going through the casualty clearing station he got a glimpse of the brutality of the Hun; not that he saw our men being treated worse than their own, but all were handled in a manner unknown in our corresponding casualty clearing stations.

On 27th August at 4 a.m. we received a warning order that the Brigade would attack and to be ready to move at 8 a.m. The general orders were to pierce the Hindenburg Line, capture Fontaine Crosilles and continue the advance in a south-easterly direction and take Riencourt. 6th and 7th H.L.I. were to be the assaulting battalions, ourselves in Brigade reserve, two of our companies having the special task of mopping up Fontaine Crosilles. We were to move about a mile in rear of the assaulting battalions. The advance commenced covered by a powerful barrage, and when on the rising ground other barrages covering other advances could be clearly seen. Against this overwhelming artillery fire the enemy did not stand in numbers, but his machine-guns, light and heavy, were bravely manned and caused many casualties. As the advance progressed great numbers of these guns were passed, as a rule with at least one dead German beside each gun. A belt of country had to be passed through on which a hostile heavy artillery barrage had been put down. It was extraordinary how few casualties were incurred in going through it. The formation of "blobs" adopted proved most suitable and elastic, if difficult to direct. The left of the assaulting battalions was to have touched Fontaine Crosilles but swung away to the right. This left an unprotected flank to them, as the nearest troops on that flank were the Canadians near Cherisy. Our leading companies ("B" and "C") keeping on our original line of advance came under heavy fire as they crossed the valley of the Sensee river. Captain Fyfe was in command and at once decided to attack the enemy, who were entrenched



on the slope facing him behind the Fontaine Crosilles—Crosilles road. Between the road and the river was a line of wire entanglements, and in addition a field-gun was in action against us at point blank range. Having examined the wire, Captain Fyfe led the companies through and found the enemy holding a communication trench running obliquely from the road. This was at once attacked and five machine-guns captured. At this point a Bosche coming out of a dug-out raised his rifle and shot Captain Fyfe, who subsequently died of wounds. The Hun was at once despatched but little satisfaction did that give for the death of one of our bravest and most gallant officers. In front of the communication trench a further enemy post was discovered in trenches. This was bringing machine-gun fire to bear on the captured position. Lieut. Legate accordingly with four men attempted to rush this post by advancing from shell hole to shell hole. But in this gallant attempt he was killed, and the two companies, now left without a single officer, decided to hold on to what they had gained. This action, however, made the enemy on our front withdraw and the left flank of the assaulting battalions was protected.

The remainder of the Battalion which had swung to the left now joined "B" and "C" Companies, and the whole Battalion moved to the right flank of the Brigade and formed up on the road in rear of the 6th H.L.I. to support them in the attack on Riencourt. This was timed for 4 p.m., then 4.30 p.m. Then orders were received that the advance would be against a limited objective, but that also was cancelled, and the welcome news came that we would be relieved by the 57th Division. Prior to this we had to send two companies to hold Fontaine Crosilles, to cover the gap between ourselves and the Canadians. "A" and "C" Companies were sent there under command of Acting R.S.M. Jones, as by this time there was only one company officer left with the Battalion—Lieut. W. H. Milne.

The relief took place and we moved out on the morning of 28th August.

During the night our Headquarters were in a captured pill box, where files of papers and maps dealing with defence schemes were collected. It appears that this pill box had been a last obstacle to our attacks in this part in 1917, but had not been taken then.

The total casualties in the operations from 24th to 28th August were : Officers killed, 2, died of wounds, 2, missing, 3, wounded, 8 ; other ranks killed, 18, died of wounds, 1, wounded and missing, 9, wounded, 247. Total officers, 15 ; other ranks, 275.

There is a great reaction after a battle. Soon after we left our position we found our field-kitchens and had a good breakfast, preceded by a tot of rum, and as we continued our march to Mercatel songs and jokes filled the air. Arriving at Mercatel dog tired we slept for long. When we awakened it was to reorganise into four companies of two platoons each, indent for damaged and lost equipment and generally get ready to carry on.

On the 1st of September we again were on the move forward, arriving at Bullecourt on the following day. From there on the 3rd we moved by Riencourt to a jumping-off point in the Hindenburg Support Line. Here a bloodless battle was engaged in. The Brigade received orders to attack Queant and Pronville, taking up a line beyond these places and linking up with the Guards Division on the right. We along with the 7th H.L.I. were the leading battalions. As Queant and Pronville were found to be unoccupied the barrage was cancelled and these places were occupied without a fight and a section of the Hindenburg Line near Tadpole Copse was held. This line was held until the 7th when we were relieved and went into a bivouac area near St. Leger. The day we came out we got heavily shelled with gas and had a number of casualties. We had a good rest at St. Leger,

where the ingenuity of the man was tested in erecting shelters, the conditions of Palestine being reproduced as we lay in an open valley devoid of cover, but here the bivouac was required not as a shelter from the sun, but from the rain and cold, a more severe test to the architect. As always happened, the Battalion was very soon housed, the degree of comfort varying with the skill of the craftsman. The villages round about were not nearly so badly smashed up as the ones further back; there were certainly very few roofs to be seen, but most of the walls stood.

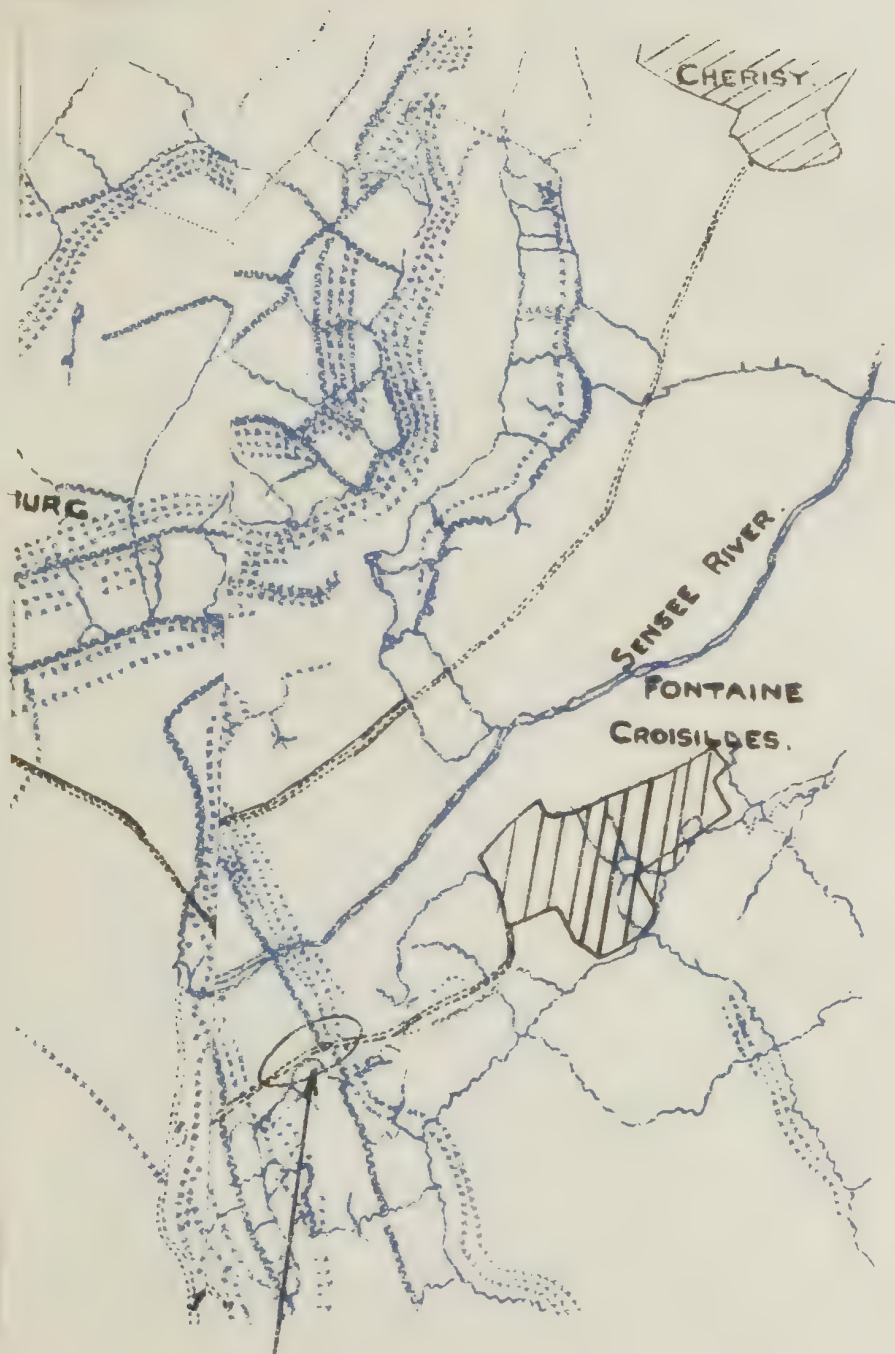
The Boscche airmen were by no means reduced to impotency. On the 15th September we saw them shoot down in flames six of our sausage balloons, all on the sector in front of us and apparently without loss to himself. On other days we saw more of our balloons coming down in flames, but it never seemed to make any difference, as soon after fresh balloons rose in their places and these solitary eyes of the gunners had recommenced their harrying work.

While at St. Leger our Corps commander, Lieut.-General Sir Charles Ferguson, addressed the Brigade and complimented it on the work done. He said our Division had made a name for itself in France, but warned us that reputations made by Divisions in France did not always last. The Divisional Commander, Major-General John Hill, also visited us and presented a number of military medals.

On 13th September a party of officers were taken by motor lorry to Pronville, and after a two-mile tramp across country reached the part of the Hindenburg Support Line in which the Headquarters of the battalion we were to relieve were situated. Before, however, these Headquarters were reached, a miscellaneous assortment of gas shells landed in the neighbourhood of the trench, and the gas-masks were donned. It was accordingly an extremely breathless and hot group of officers who finally arrived at the Headquarters dug-out, and their tempers were not at all improved by

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being greeted with shrieks of laughter and told that the situation was perfectly normal, that gas was put over night and day, that masks were quite unnecessary, and that with an ample supply of stout and Irish whiskey the gas actually was good for one and gave one a better appetite.

By a curious coincidence the battalion we were to relieve were the 1st Munster Fusiliers, the battalion who had given us our first lesson in trench warfare, when we had been attached to them for a few days after our arrival at Gallipoli. We found them now the same cheery fellows, but we were sorry that they had with them now only one officer who had served on the Peninsula.

The line here was held in a way we had not encountered yet, although the general principles of the defence were the same as ever. The main line of resistance was in the second line of the old Hindenburg Support Line, and our portion lay between the shattered villages of Inchy and Moeuvres. In front of this line there were a series of posts in No-Man's Land, each held by ten or twelve men. The support line was the main Hindenburg Support Line.

The Munsters had three companies in the line, and one in support. In the case of the left and centre companies it was fairly simple to get an idea of the dispositions and make the necessary arrangements for the relief, although it was impossible to visit the posts outside the line. The right company, however, was not so simple. There was considerable doubt as to what ground was held in the neighbourhood of Moeuvres. There had been continual scrapping. One night we pushed out a new post near the cemetery, and the next night the enemy drove it in again. It was a very nasty spot, and it so happened that we had called on the day that it was our turn to do the pushing, and the Munsters were very busy making arrangements for the discomfiture of the enemy.

For these reasons it was impossible to find out the dispositions of that company, and we had to return home with the promise that the situation would be cleared up before we arrived, and all would be well.

Before we actually went up to the line, we were informed that there was to be a slight alteration of battalion and brigade boundaries. The dispositions of our battalion were "D" Company on the right, "C" in the centre, "B" on the left, and "A" in support. When we did reach the line to take over on the night of 16th, the redistribution of boundaries cut out "D" Company's bit of the line altogether, so that they came in as a second support company, and incidentally they were in the other brigade's area, as they could not find accommodation in our own sector.

"B" Company were all outside the main trench, and were disposed with two posts in front and a support with their headquarters in No-Man's Land. There was no wire on the enemy's side of our position, though there was a perfect labyrinth of very heavy wire behind us.

"C" Company, which was only thirty-five strong at this time, had their headquarters in a deep dug-out in the line of resistance, along with a very small support. The remainder of the company was occupying two posts, one about 500 yards up a trench which ran straight towards the enemy, and in which the enemy had a post just over the road beyond ours: the other was about 250 yards to the right of this, on the far side of the road and absolutely in the open. This was the post which was held by Corporal Hunter and six men, and it was merely a small pit dug in the ground.

"D" Company for that night were housed in a deep dug-out in the main support line, with their headquarters in a concrete faced shelter in the back wall of the trench, excellently sited if we had been fighting the other way, but well-known to the enemy, and getting hit by about three out of

every five shells aimed at it, as did all the other dug-outs and shelters in the line.

“ A ” Company were in support on the left flank.

The night of the relief was quiet, and except for continual desultory gas shelling nothing of note occurred. Early on the 18th it was decided that “ D ” Company should relieve “ C ” Company that night, partly because the company was outside our Brigade area, but principally because “ C ” Company was far too weak numerically for the extent of front it had to hold, and even the posts were not sufficiently strongly garrisoned. During the day “ D ” Company lent “ C ” Corpl. I. Ross and three men to form a connecting link between the forward posts and their headquarters, and these were posted about midway up the communication trench. The relief was to be carried out as soon as it was dark enough to cover the movement.

The enemy decreed otherwise. Just as we were about to “ Stand To ” in the evening, a barrage of gas shell and high explosive came down on the whole line. For three quarters of an hour it was impossible to enter the main Hindenburg support trench. We could only sit in our dug-outs and wonder what was happening. The stories we had heard of the Bosches being in the third and fourth lines of our systems in the March advance, before it was known that an attack was taking place, came vividly into our minds, and our great anxiety was that we should not be caught like rats in a trap.

Every telephone line in the system went “ dis ” in the first three minutes, and it was quite impossible to find out what was happening until the shelling should have moderated a little. We had just to rest our souls in patience, and relight the candles as they were put out by the concussion every time a shell struck the dug-out. This was the constant occupation, both in the deep dug-outs and in the concrete faced shelters in the main support line, and not for the first time we



blessed the Germans for the good solid workmanship of these dug-outs.

Shortly after the barrage came down details of the battalion on our right began to pass the dug-out where " D " Company was located, and Sergt. Meiklejohn, who was in charge there, at once got two platoons out of their shelter, and formed a flank facing Moeuvres, reporting his action. Beyond this movement, there was no information of any kind, but from it we were able to judge that an attack had been made at least on the right.

As soon as the shelling moderated, it was determined to carry through the relief of " C " Company. Two platoons of " D " Company were ordered to move to the relief at once ; the remaining two were instructed to hold the flank position they had taken up, until the situation became a little clearer, and meantime they were to try to get someone, whose job it was to hold that part of the line, to take over from them ; if they succeeded in this they were to rejoin their company in " C " Company's area.

The first thing to be done was to ascertain what had really taken place. There was a strong suspicion that an attack had been made on the right. Had it developed on our own front ? Were our posts in front still intact ? " C " Company, like everyone else, had had a most uncomfortable time, and they had not sufficient men to send out patrols to visit their posts. It was, therefore, determined that as soon as " D " Company arrived, strong patrols should be sent along the trench to gain touch with the battalion on our right, if there was one ; and forward to find out how the posts had fared. As soon as this information was obtained, the relief was to take place, with any new dispositions the information obtained rendered desirable.

Our first bit of news arrived from a curious quarter. In the general excitement, Stretcher-Bearer Chester of " C " Company had not been noticed for some time, although he

had not been missed, and now while the arrangements were being made he arrived at the Company Headquarters. On being asked where he had been, he told us that he had been out at the post at the end of the communication trench to see if there was anything doing in his line. He had found the post and everything was all right. This information was most reassuring, but it was decided that the patrol must be sent in spite of it, and with instructions that it was to find out about the other post as well.

The connecting post half-way up the communication trench had been a particularly warm corner, and Corpl. I. Ross had been wounded in several places early in the barrage. In spite of this he had refused to go back, and had carried on for over an hour, visiting the various posts and doing invaluable work. It was only now that under a direct order he consented to leave the line, taking with him to Battalion Headquarters the first report of the situation. For his plucky conduct he was awarded the Military Medal.

The patrol sent to "C" Company's posts in front, found that in the trench intact. After a consultation with the N.C.O. in charge, he and Sergt. Glover got out of the trench, and went to visit Corpl. Hunter's post. The two N.C.O.'s had not gone more than 30 yards when they were met with a shower of stick-grenades thrown from a position between the posts. They had to beat a hasty retreat, and were lucky to get back to the trench with no more damage than a wound to "C" Company's corporal.

As soon as this was known, Corpl. M'Ewing and Pte. J. Adams made the second attempt to reach the post. This time it was an effort to reach the post across country and unseen, but when M'Ewing and Adams were just short of the Moeuvres-Inchy Road, a couple of Verey lights were fired from the far side of the road and a considerable number of Bosches were seen. A blatter of musketry was opened on them, and they too had to give up the attempt and return.

A third attempt was made later, but it fared no better than the previous ones, and we were reluctantly compelled to assume that the post had been scuppered. The patrol along the trench to the right went as far as the junction of the shallow trench leading round the cemetery, and did not get touch with anyone.

It was now determined to carry out the relief at once, and as no information could be obtained as to what had happened on the right, it was decided to relieve "C's" remaining advanced post, and to form a defensive flank along the communication trench. The remainder of "D" Company arrived at this time after handing over to another battalion, and the new dispositions were made, "C" Company, now reduced to seventeen men, taking up "D's" old headquarters about 10 p.m.

The remainder of the night was normal, but the situation was most uncomfortable. Our own patrols had located a considerable number of the enemy round the posts. We guessed the situation fairly correctly, but it was not till the 19th that we learned definitely what had happened. The enemy had made a determined effort to retake Moeuvres, and our right flank was just on the edge of his attack. Owing to the determined defence of two companies of the right Brigade, the enemy had not got much for his pains, but he had succeeded in driving in nearly all the advanced posts to the right of our sector.

Nothing further occurred till 4 p.m. on the 18th, when a bombing attack was made on our post at the end of the communication trench. The post was driven back a short distance, but managed to regain its position without loss. Meanwhile the S.O.S. had been sent, and for half an hour we had an excellent daylight firework display, right along the road in front, and incidentally on Corpl. Hunter's post. The enemy started retaliation at once, and cut our telephone wires as usual, so that once we had got the



barrage on we could not turn it off without considerable delay.

At dark on the night of 18th "A" Company relieved "D," who now retired for a space. Just before dawn on the 19th one man of "C" Company came in through "B" Company's right post. He was one of Corpl. Hunter's devoted band, and along with another had been sent to see about rations, and give information about the post. Unfortunately his pal was killed by an enemy grenade, and he was the first person to let us know that the post was still gamely holding out. It was too late, however, to do anything that night.

In the early afternoon of the 19th we were informed that we were to be relieved by the Canadians that night, and about 4 p.m. we were told that the Brigade on our right was going to re-establish all the lost ground under a barrage at 5 p.m. The barrage was to extend along the whole front, and our "A" Company was to push forward the post in the communication trench and to re-occupy Hunter's post, on the assumption that it was lost, but we hoped otherwise. The 7th H.L.I., acting on our right flank, were to re-establish the posts round the cemetery, and form a link between us and the battalion on our right.

Lieut. W. H. Milne, with one half of "A" Company, endeavoured to push forward in the communication trench, but failed to get beyond the road. Meanwhile Captain Donald, with the other half of the company, jumping off from the centre of the communication trench, followed hard on the barrage. But Captain Donald was killed, and his party had heavy casualties and rather lost direction.

Between 7 and 8 o'clock "D" Company was sent up to support "A." The situation was extremely obscure. We knew what had happened in the trench, but no reports had been received yet from either Captain Donald's party or the 7th H.L.I., who had jumped off from the same place.



Some of the men who had gone over, came in about 8 o'clock, and from various reports we were able to piece together the fact that 7th H.L.I. had got their objectives. A little later two men of "C" Company came in to Advanced Company Headquarters, and told us that they belonged to Hunter's post, and that he was still holding the post with two men, and had sent them in to try to find out what was happening. A platoon was at once told off to relieve them, and a few minutes later we were able to welcome them back.

These men had gamely stuck to their post for 96 hours. They had no food or water other than what they had taken with them, namely, what is technically known as "the un-expired portion of the day's ration," and an iron ration each and a water bottle full of water. They had been continually surrounded by enemies and had beaten off every attack. They had yielded not a foot of ground, in spite of the fact that our own barrage had twice passed over them. They had no information, and no orders beyond those given when they were mounted, and yet they remained at their post until they were covered by our own troops in front of them. For this deed Corpl. Hunter got the V.C. and was promoted Sergeant : the other six men of his post each got the D.C.M.

Between ten and eleven a full strength battalion of the Canadians relieved us, and they found that their first job was to dig shelters for their men, as the three or four dug-outs which had served to protect our small battalion were quite insufficient for them. By midnight we were on our way home to Queant.

Our four days at Moeuvres were among the most trying we spent in the war, and we have the presumption to think we did well. Three companies received a special message from the Brigadier. The fourth company would have got it also, but by the luck of the war it was out of all the scrapping. "B" Company were occupying a most uncom-



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20,000.





fortable position for four days in No-Man's Land, but the enemy did not think it worth while visiting them. Consequently this company, owing to the fact that they had no opposition, had to hold the front for four days unrelieved, and were through no fault of their own omitted.

The telephones were never working when they were most required, but that was no fault of the signallers. The incessant enemy shelling was continually cutting the wires, and it was as a rule only for odd intervals of half an hour at a time when things were quiet that Headquarters was through to companies. In spite, however, of the heaviest shelling the signallers never allowed a break to go unattended, and they were continually out under heavy fire repairing the damage. The state of the telephone service forced us to rely on a sadly depleted staff of runners, and right well did they do their job. All companies were so weak that two men was the most they could spare for this most important service, yet these men, without a grouse and with no rest for four days, were continually carrying messages between the different headquarters, and that too in record time. From "C" Company Headquarters to Battalion Headquarters was a good seventeen minutes hard walking, yet runners from these Headquarters frequently delivered messages within ten minutes of the time they were written, and were back with a reply in twenty minutes. The good work of at least three runners was recognised with the award of the Military Medal.

During this tour we lost four valuable officers. Captain W. F. Donald, M.C., who had been with us rather less than a fortnight, was killed while leading his company to retake Hunter's post. In the late days of the war we had felt fortunate in having an experienced officer of his calibre posted and had welcomed him as a company commander, an officer very difficult to replace. Lieut. A. Bryson, another newcomer, was dangerously wounded on the night



of 19th September while acting as Liaison Officer between 7th H.L.I. and ourselves, and died three days later. On the 17th our M.O., Captain K. Ross, was killed by a shell while visiting the companies, and Lieut. T. B. Clerk, the Adjutant, was wounded at the same time.

Lieut. R. Turnbull was blown down one of the shafts of "C" Company's Headquarters by the concussion of a shell on the night of 17th but fortunately no damage was done. Lieut. Hillson met a gas shell in the entrance passage of Battalion Headquarters, and had an extraordinarily jaundiced appearance for days, but otherwise was neither physically nor mentally upset. Lieut. W. H. Milne was struck on the back by a grenade on the last night, but he too was unhurt.

On the 24th we relieved the 6th H.L.I. in a sector to the right of Moeuvres and little happened there, a contrast to our last tour in the line. A few deserters came over, a convenient road being by a communication trench which led from one line to the other. One deserter had been an Orderly Room Clerk at Cologne; he forged a railway pass for himself to Cambrai, walked from there to the German front line until he came to the Bosche block in this communication trench opposite ours. He then told the corporal he was going to desert, and far from being discouraged was told by the corporal that had it not been for a wife and family in Germany he would have joined him. Later on one of the post also came over. The Division opposite was a cavalry one and they were poor fighters and were practically all captured later on.

On the 27th a general attack was made on the Canal du Nord and continuing to the right of Bourslon Wood. In this attack our Brigade had to clear up the Hindenburg front line between Moeuvres and the Bapaume-Cambrai road. We were in reserve to the Brigade and for a change were spectators of the battle, the only active operations falling to us in the plan of battle being to rush two posts in a communication trench just in front of our line when the barrage

commenced. This was successfully done and we remained in our old front line. Some tanks came up over night and made good tracks through the dense wire in front of us. As only a hurried reconnaissance had been made on the previous afternoon it spoke much for their eye for country that they were led to the exact spots arranged. The barrage opened just before day-break and as the light increased we saw that the tanks had got across the canal and were labouring up the hill beyond, all very busy shooting and none knocked out. As the result of this attack, Bourlon Wood was evacuated by the enemy and positions established by our troops beyond and on both flanks of the wood. Soon after daylight the stream of prisoners began to pass through us and continued all day. It was a good sight to see them being made to carry our wounded. They seemed very ready to volunteer, though certainly for no philanthropic reasons. Unwounded prisoners were not allowed to go back without assisting our casualties, hence the volunteers.

After a successful battle one was always struck with the altered conditions of the old front line. What one morning may have been a very hot spot, in the afternoon becomes quiet and pleasant. No-Man's Land is explored and the various problems about the enemy's posts and trenches are solved. The enemy wire was extraordinary thick but the tank tracks excellent. Here and there had been made tank traps—large pits with vertical sides—but they had been avoided.

On the night after this battle we settled for a few days in our old front line, to the left of the Cambrai-Bapaume road, not sleeping much owing to the cold. Some salving was done round about Moeuvres. Meanwhile other Divisions were continuing the advance and the outskirts of Cambrai had been reached, and following the usual practice both flanks were pushing on, leaving the town itself in a salient. On the 1st of October we moved forward again, crossing the

St. Quentin canal and going into a line in support of the front line. Our transport lines were established at Cantaing, beside the field-guns. This shows the change that had taken place in our dispositions ; it was now approaching a war of movement. While it was handy to have transport lines close up, it was costly in horse-flesh, the gunners having heavy losses, mostly from high velocity shells. " C " Company Headquarters, which was merely an uncovered cut in a trench, got a shell into it and four officers were wounded and C.S.M. Jones, who had acted as R.S.M. for some time, was killed. He was a very brave soldier and had been with us since early in 1916. Our area in front of Cambrai was constantly being shelled ; probably the enemy was getting rid of his ammunition dumps in this way, preferring to send his shells over at us to blowing them up later on. Whatever the reason was, it was a lively spot, the bridges on the St. Quentin canal among the woods and his old ammunition dumps in these woods being favourite targets, the sound of the bursting shells and exploding dumps being intensified by the trees and hollows.

On the night 4/5th October we took over the line from the 5th Royal Scots Fusiliers and elements of the 4th K.O.S.B. They had been in action in an attack against a suburb of Cambrai called the Fauberg de Paris. We were informed that the line consisted of posts and a redoubt and that these could not be visited by day, as no communication trenches led up to them and the ground was under direct machine-gun fire from the enemy. " D " Company was sent to take over the redoubt ; Headquarters was established in a pill box on a road leading towards Cambrai. This became a popular rendezvous for tourists in the disguise of gunners and others, and resulted in some brisk shelling from the enemy, but these pill boxes were well made and no damage was done. At night we nearly lost our Quartermaster and rations, as speeding up the road he passed the pill box, and



was only stopped by a forward post from going over to the enemy by mistake. These discoveries cannot be pleasant and one can imagine the rations came back even quicker than they went up. "D" Company found the redoubt they were supposed to be taking over to be a myth. There was no redoubt, only a maze of trenches a foot or so in depth, sufficient to appear on air photos and so inserted on our maps of the enemy's trenches. They had a hard time patrolling to send back correct dispositions; they were more or less in the air. In addition to the work on hand "D" Company received orders to make an attack along a trench to their right; this, however, was cancelled, as we got word that the 1st Royal Munster Fusiliers would relieve us on the night of the 5/6th. This relief was completed by 2.30 on the morning of the 6th and we marched back to the area recently left by us near the Canal du Nord. As we crossed the bridge of the St. Quentin Canal not a shot was fired at us, a very remarkable thing, as intermittent shelling there had been going on all night. A few high velocity shells chased us through Cantaing, and then no interruption to a weary march finishing for the different companies at various hours after daybreak. The spell in the line at Cambrai was very short but as breezy a 24 hours as one could want, considering there was no special battle on.

We were now sent away from the battle area for a rest and on the 8th October arrived at Lignereuil, where we remained for ten days. Here for some unaccountable reason we had a first class chateau to ourselves. The estaminet attached sold very bad red wine at twelve francs a bottle. Only troops just out of the line would have bought it. Lignereuil lies near Avesne le Compte in very pretty country, and we were much the better of the rest in a place not churned up with shell holes.

On 19th October we moved back to our old quarters in Mont St. Eloy, finding there no trace of our previous labours



at improvement ; beds and tables all gone west. The next day the march to Henin Lietard was most interesting, though the rain fell in torrents. Our route was by Neuville St. Vaast, Vimy Ridge, Willerval, through the area we had been in for some months ; now the ridge was miles behind the line. The roads leading up to the old enemy line were execrable. After getting about four miles behind the old line the villages were not so shattered and at Henin Lietard some houses were almost intact ; the coal mines, however, had been ruined, and into some canals had been turned. Booby traps were numerous, and special companies were hunting for them. Their presence gave us confidence in living in the houses chosen for billets ; but a few days later, we afterwards heard, a number of these were blown up by mines with delayed action. We continued our march in the direction of Douai, reaching Planque on the 21st and stopping there for three days. The further we went the better the condition of the villages became. At Planque the houses looked intact, though the interiors were strewn with rubbish ; still after some cleaning up it looked quite well and by a little selection the billets became quite well furnished. The only place the enemy had blown up was his bathing establishment and delousing plant, a fine place built of concrete.

From Flines we marched to Landas, and after one night there we moved to Lecelles. We were gradually overtaking the Hun, and this village received unwelcome attentions from his guns and aeroplanes. The civilians had been sent away, but many of them visited their homes by day to collect the produce of their gardens and to salve odd pieces of furniture. Part of the village seemed to disappear daily, and one could see that a comparatively short time was required to produce such sad sights as we had seen around Vimy. During our week at Lecelles we did some useful training. The Corps Commander announced his intention of inspecting the Battalion at work ; and, having made the

most minute preparations for this event, including the engaging at great risk of a L.T.M. Battery to give a vivid touch to our company schemes, we got orders to move to St. Amand, being now in Brigade reserve. Once more we were fortunate in our billets, but at this stage of the war even the front line was not without its comforts.

On our Divisional front the enemy was holding a line fortified by the River Escaut, the Jard Canal, and a flooded area. It was not intended that we should attack him here. The plan was to push him on both flanks and thus force his withdrawal from a position, a frontal assault upon which would have involved heavy loss, even granted that his numbers were few. Very close touch was maintained by means of patrols, which had to employ somewhat primitive rafts to negotiate the intervening water. The Hun's withdrawal was clearly a matter of hours, and on the morning of the 8th November we moved forward to Odomez in readiness for the chase. The same day we received the code word which set in motion the machinery of pursuit.

The following morning, with the aid of a very temporary bridge, we continued our advance. The retreating enemy had made a thorough job of the cross-roads, and guns and transport had to make wide detours. But before we arrived the civilians were busy, some with shovels, others with their hands, filling in the enormous craters. The people seemed to be dazed with excitement. The sudden relief after four years of misery proved too much for one poor woman, who in her sheer joy lost the kindly light of reason. We halted for a few hours at Chene Raoul, but time was precious, and by night we were in comfortable billets across the Belgian border.

At dawn on the 10th November we set out for our last taste of the war, little thinking that our hours of danger and discomfort were now numbered. The Battalion was

advanced guard to the Brigade, which was moving forward via Pommeroeul, Hautrage, and the Bois de Baudour.

In the advance from Vimy we had so far been only among the first friendly troops to enter the villages deserted by the Hun ; now we were the first, and we shall not readily forget the enthusiasm with which we were greeted. We were bombarded with flowers, coffee, and cigars. The generosity of these kind people was much greater than their knowledge of the enemy's dispositions, with the result that our approach was well advertised. The latter part of our advance was along the north edge of the Bois de Baudour. Immediately east of Garenne we had to cross a wide gap, and here the enemy machine-guns, which were cunningly sited and carefully concealed, got busy. As our van-guard closed with him, one Hun, whose gun was mounted at the top window of a house, waved the white flag. The ruse, however, was transparent, and the last shot of the war, as far as we were concerned, silenced him.

At 17.00 we got orders to relieve the cavalry outposts ; but, as this would have involved a considerable march in an anti-Bosche direction, the spirit, rather than the letter, of this order was obeyed. At about midnight the shelling, which had been fairly heavy, ceased, and some hours later there was not a sound to be heard. Patrols sent out before dawn reported that all was clear for over a mile. It had been a bitterly cold night, and we were quite glad when it was time to move again.

At 07.00 on the 11th November we set out for our last attack, our objective being the Mons-Jurbise road. There was no opposition of any kind and by 09.00 we had reached the objective. Our job had proved an easy one, and we quite expected to get orders to continue the pursuit. But of a sudden there arose a clatter of hoofs and an obviously excited transport officer dashed up to the Commanding Officer, brandishing one of the pink forms we had learned

to hate. But never before had an Army Form borne such a message as this : " Hostilities will cease at 11.00 ; until further orders units will not move beyond the position occupied at that time." At last there had dawned the day for which we had lived—and so many had died. Strange to relate there was no tremendous excitement. Perhaps the philosopher spoke truly when he said that one always has a feeling of regret on doing a thing for the last time. Perhaps we had been fed on rumours so often that we took this for one. Perhaps we were too weary in mind and body to grasp the significance of the stupendous news. Or was it that our thoughts turned at this time to those grand men who had given their lives for this great end ? Whatever the reason, the fact remains that there was no enthusiasm in keeping with the event.

We had a short spell of outpost duty, and then moved to Erbisoeul a village about five miles from Mons. Little need be said regarding our life after the Armistice. On the whole it was quite a pleasant blend of training, inspections, dances, concerts, football and leave. Erbisoeul was an attractive village, and there we remained until, thinned by demobilisation, we were reduced to *cadré* strength. The last remnant of the Battalion reached Gales in May, 1919.





## APPENDICES.

- I. LIST OF OFFICERS, SENIOR N.C.O.'s, ETC., WHO EMBARKED IN MAY, 1915.
- II. ROLL OF OFFICERS, WARRANT OFFICERS, NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS  
AND MEN WHO DIED ON SERVICE.
- III. HONOURS AND AWARDS.
- IV. TURKISH ORDERS FOR ADVANCE ON ROMANI.



## APPENDIX I

### LIST OF OFFICERS, WARRANT OFFICERS, AND SENIOR N.C.O.'s WHO EMBARKED FOR OVERSEAS IN MAY, 1915.

Commanding Officer	-	Colonel F. L. MORRISON, V.D.
Second in Command	-	Major T. L. JOWITT.
Adjutant - -	-	Major J. R. SIMSON, H.L.I.
Quartermaster	-	Lieut. T. CLARK.
Padre - -	-	Major A. J. CAMPBELL.
Medical Officer	-	Captain A. D. KENNEDY.
Signalling Officer	-	Lieut. R. H. MORRISON.
Machine Gun Officer	-	Lieut. A. B. CURRIE.
Transport Officer	-	Lieut. W. L. BUCHANAN.
R.S.M. - -	-	J. ALEXANDER, H.L.I.
R.Q.M.S. - -	-	A. M. STEEDMAN.
Pipe Major - -	-	J. THOMSON.
Orderly Room Sergeant	-	A. KELLY.
Transport Sergeant	-	R. BIRRELL.
Pioneer Sergeant -	-	W. STEVENSON.
Signalling Sergeant	-	D. BONE.

#### " A " COMPANY.

O.C. - - -	-	Major A. MARSHALL DOWNIE.
Second in Command	-	Captain GEORGE MORTON, Junr.
C.S.M. - - -	-	J. MATHIESON.
C.Q.M.S. - - -	-	D. K. MILLER.
No. 1 Platoon.	Lieut. W. BECKETT.	Sergt. D. ORR.
No. 2        "	"	" T. KEANEY.
No. 3        "	" L. G. AITKEN.	" D. M'DONALD.
No. 4        "	" J. G. MILNE.	" R. ROBERTSON.

#### " B " COMPANY.

O.C. - - -	-	Captain J. M'DONALD.
Second in Command	-	
C.S.M. - - -	-	J. SMITH.
C.Q.M.S. - - -	-	F. W. ADAMS.



# 238 THE 5TH HIGHLAND LIGHT INFANTRY

No. 5 Platoon.	Lieut. N. R. CAMPBELL.	Sergt. J. ARTHUR.
No. 6	„ 2nd Lieut. LEWIS MACLELLAN.	„ R. ALLAN.
No. 7	„ 2nd „ R. E. MAY.	„ J. STEWART.
No. 8	„ 2nd „ R. M. MILLER.	„ G. MILLER.

## “ C ” COMPANY.

O.C.	-	-	-	Captain J. B. NEILSON.
Second in Command	-			Captain D. E. BRAND.
C.S.M.	-	-	-	D. CHRISTIE.
C.Q.M.S.	-	-	-	H. CAMERON.
No. 9 Platoon.	2nd Lieut. J. W. MALCOLM.	Sergt. J. STANGER.		
No. 10	„ „ T. A. FYFE.	„ W. M'INTOSH.		
No. 11	„ 2nd „ J. W. MAIN.	„ J. COUBROUGH.		
No. 12	„ 2nd „ J. C. CLARK.	„ W. THOMSON.		

## “ D ” COMPANY.

O.C.	-	-	-	Captain J. A. FINDLAY.
Second in Command	-			Captain J. D. BLACK.
C.S.M.	-	-	-	R. M'LEOD.
C.Q.M.S.	-	-	-	W. C. HENDERSON.
No. 13 Platoon.	Lieut. J. F. MOIR.	Sergt. A. CLIMIE.		
No. 14	„ 2nd Lieut. E. T. TOWNSEND.	„ R. BEST.		
No. 15	„ 2nd „ L. H. WATSON.	„ E. ROBINSON.		
No. 16	„ „ E. M. LEITH.	„ D. T. PATTERSON.		

## APPENDIX II

### ROLL OF OFFICERS, WARRANT OFFICERS, NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND MEN WHO DIED ON SERVICE.

#### (A) OFFICERS

Col. F. L. Morrison, C.B., D.S.O., V.D.	Capt. E. T. Townsend.
Lt.-Col. J. R. Simson, D.S.O., att. 5th K.O.S.B.	Lieut. A. E. Barbé, att. R.A.F.
Major A. M. Downie.	Lieut. R. G. Gardner.
Major J. A. Findlay, D.S.O.	Lieut. F. Legate.
Major T. L. Jowitt.	Lieut. A. H. Malcolm, 9th H.L.I.
Capt. J. D. Black, M.C.	Lieut. J. W. Malcolm.
Capt. W. L. Buchanan.	Lieut. C. T. Price.
Capt. W. F. Donald, M.C., 9th H.L.I.	Lieut. W. P. Scott.
Capt. T. A. Fyfe, M.C.	Lieut. G. Sillars.
Capt. E. F. M. Frost.	Sec.-Lieut. A. Bryson.
Capt. J. MacDonald.	Sec.-Lieut. W. Dow, 8th S.R.
Capt. L. MacLellan, M.C.	Sec.-Lieut. S. Kirby, Border Regt.
Capt. J. G. Milne.	Sec.-Lieut. R. E. May.
Capt. G. Morton, Junr.	Sec.-Lieut. E. D. Turner.
Capt. P. M'L. Thomson, att. 5th A. & S.H.	Sec.-Lieut. A. M. Turner.
	Capt. K. Ross, R.A.M.C.

#### (B) OTHER RANKS.

1938 Pte. C. Adams.	222 Sgt. W. Arthur.
55801 „ W. Adam.	2293 Pte. W. Auld.
200432 „ A. Ainslie.	1169 „ J. Barr.
3132 „ D. Aitkenhead.	200498 „ R. Bennett.
200515 Cpl. J. Allcock.	201368 „ S. Bickerstaff.
201049 Pte. D. Anderson.	201733 Sgt. J. Black, M.M.
1409 „ A. Anderson.	55880 Pte. W. Black.
2244 „ J. Anderson.	1890 „ W. Blair.
1755 „ J. Anderson.	55853 „ E. Booth.
2146 „ W. Armstrong.	55769 „ C. Bolland.

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55803 Pte. C. Bowman.	1610 Pte, J. Dow.
1819 „ W. Bogle.	1669 Sgt. D. Downs.
201609 „ P. Brady.	200393 Cpl. J. Dunbar.
201427 „ J. Bradley.	201628 Pte. J. Espy.
1676 „ A. Brandie.	6537 „ J. Faichney.
200816 „ J. Brannigan.	1908 „ G. Fallow.
B/8918 „ M. Breen.	50556 „ J. Farrell.
201488 L.C. G. Bremner.	910 „ J. Ferguson.
1549 Pte. J. Broadfoot.	3541 „ A. Ferguson.
201467 „ J. Brophy.	4163 „ A. Ferrie.
33081 Sgt. J. Brown.	200158 Cpl. J. Field, M.M.
201167 Pte. R. Brown.	201496 Pte. J. Findlay.
201367 „ T. Brown.	204075 „ W. Finlay.
26955 „ J. Bruce.	198 Sgt. J. Fleming.
201153 „ J. Burns.	41182 Pte. W. Flynn.
2437 „ S. Bustard.	200341 L/C. F. Fraser.
58 „ J. Callaghan	3030 Pte. J. Fraser.
(1/1st L.D.C.C.)	201732 Cpl. H. Fricker.
3583 Cpl. W. Callaghan.	1342 L/C. A. Friel.
1372 „ R. Cameron.	1958 Pte. J. Gibson.
200183 „ J. Campbell.	203286 „ J. Gilliver.
3323 Pte. J. Campbell.	203054 „ E. Gittens.
27497 „ D. Chisholm.	200233 „ F. Glancey.
1612 „ C. Chisholm.	3414 „ P. Glen.
200177 „ A. Christie.	4365 „ R. Gordon.
200587 „ J. Clark.	201397 „ D. Graham.
201529 „ H. Clark.	1206 „ J. Green.
2013 „ J. Cleugh.	2424 „ J. Graham.
36334 „ E. Cockburn.	1424 „ H. Grimm.
200417 „ G. Collins.	50559 „ E. Halley.
2847 Sgt. T. Conley.	203080 „ T. Hamilton.
25484 Pte. R. Constable.	201704 „ W. Harvey.
465 „ P. Croal.	1769 „ J. Haveron.
2161 „ A. Crystall.	55834 „ G. Hendry.
2275 „ J. Curran.	2845 „ R. Herd.
9 „ W. Currie.	293 „ J. Heron.
1741 Cpl. G. Cuthbertson.	1628 „ S. Hill.
3376 Sgt. A. Denny.	3114 „ R. Hinshelwood.
2000 Pte. J. Deuchar.	1307 „ W. Hogg.
203411 „ W. Dickson.	38994 „ F. Hopkinson.
55809 „ J. Dixon.	2318 „ R. Horsburgh.
200664 Sgt. T. Dobbie.	4109 „ G. Houston.
200770 Pte. J. Docherty.	200138 Sgt. W. Howie.
201175 „ J. Docherty.	1999 Pte. W. Hunter.
3174 „ C. Docherty.	2600 „ W. Hutchison.
4075 „ P. Docherty.	200571 „ J. Hutton.
2669 „ C. Donnaghue.	1678 „ W. Jolly.
200864 „ J. Dornan.	201135 C.S.M. J. Jones.

1657 Pte. F. Keenan.	832 Pte. J. Main.
33693 „ W. Keiller.	35749 „ R. Mair.
203299 Cpl. J. Kelly.	3051 „ A. Maitland.
1925 Pte. J. Kelly.	201129 „ J. Malarky.
200775 „ W. Kennedy.	40190 „ D. Mallen.
203051 Cpl. S. Kerr.	203419 „ A. Mann.
32629 Pte. P. King.	2153 „ H. Martin.
200071 L/C. J. Lawson.	2154 „ J. Matchett.
1313 Pte. H. Lennie.	1561 Sgt. J. Melrose, D.C.M., Croix de Guerre.
1526 „ N. Lewis	1362 Bugler C. Menzies.
1964 Sgt. J. Lindsay.	484 Pte. D. Mercer.
2814 Pte. J. M'Atomney.	200429 L/C. R. Miller.
714 „ A. M'Aulay.	200708 „ F. Miller.
2797 „ S. M'Aulay.	201376 Pte. R. Miller.
1898 „ J. M'Aulay.	200239 C.S.M. T. Milne, D.C.M., Serbian Silver Star.
201657 „ J. M'Bride.	331505 Pte. W. Mitchell.
2253 „ O. M'Cabe.	2360 „ G. Mitchell.
201348 L/C. J. M'Cann.	1918 „ F. Montgomery.
203403 Pte. D. M'Donald.	203402 „ J. Montgomery.
201103 „ J. M'Donald.	3688 „ J. Morrison.
113 Sgt. D. M'Donald.	201459 „ S. Morrison.
201299 Pte. J. M'Donald.	1184 „ W. Morrow.
31040 „ A. M'Farlane.	55784 „ T. Mulhill.
200697 „ F. M'Ghee.	2896 „ F. Mullan.
55759 „ G. M'Gonigle.	200550 „ R. Munsey.
200299 L/C. A. M'Gregor.	1903 L/C. W. Murray.
201081 Pte. D. M'Intyre.	1704 Pte. A. Murray.
201576 „ W. M'Kay.	1181 „ P. Murray.
3128 „ J. M'Kechnie.	201079 „ J. Murray.
200407 „ N. M'Kenzie.	200591 „ D. Murray.
200665 „ R. M'Kenzie.	201036 „ J. Murray.
1943 L/C. D. M'Kenzie.	201272 „ J. Neill.
203298 Pte. R. M'Kie.	3013 „ C. Neillie.
1694 Sgt. J. M'Larty.	200701 „ H. Nesbit.
343 C.S.M. R. M'Leod.	2327 „ J. Nesbit.
201199 Pte. H. M'Leod.	6521 „ E. Norris.
201727 „ C. M'Neil.	203518 Cpl. J. O'Donnell.
1449 Sgt. D. M'Nelly.	1955 Sgt. W. Paterson.
1592 Pte. J. M'Phee.	2021 L/C. W. Paterson.
9333 „ A. M'Pherson.	1653 Pte. W. Paterson.
2969 „ D. M'Pherson.	2024 „ H. Payne.
2895 „ W. M'Roberts.	42976 „ B. Pendrick.
201158 „ A. M'Shane.	891 „ R. Pollock.
1799 „ J. M'Swann.	652 Cpl. R. Pollock.
201616 „ M. M'Varish.	200380 L/C. R. Porter.
130 „ J. M'Gregor (1/1st L.D.C.C.)	200128 Cpl. T. Primrose.
55858 „ T. Maban.	



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2812	Pte.	J. Rae.	558	C.Q.M.S.	J. Stewart.
3133	„	J. Rafferty.	1726	L/C.	H. Stewart.
201159	„	J. Revie.	2041	Pte.	A. Stirling.
201318	„	G. Rhodes.	18473	Pte.	A. Sutherland.
200700	„	G. Robertson.	33183	„	R. Sweeney.
55838	L/C.	A. Robertson.	1454	„	H. Sweeney.
371	Sgt.	R. Robertson.	1911	„	J. Sweeney.
344	„	E. Robertson.	201578	„	C. Tait.
55829	Pte.	D. Ross.	50109	„	G. Taylor.
50166	„	W. Ross.	306	Sgt.	J. Thomson.
1480	„	R. Ross.	1991	L/C.	C. Thomson.
200698	„	W. Roy.	201347	Pte.	D. Thomson.
201285	„	G. Russell.	55741	„	H. Tilsley.
32405	„	T. Scott.	50567	„	J. Tulloch.
55862	„	W. Senior.	4211	„	A. Turnbull.
1473	L/C.	J. Shields.	201178	„	W. Turner.
200319	Pte.	J. Sinclair.	200246	„	E. Twaddle.
201052	„	H. Singleton.	200473	Sgt.	R. Tweedie.
3947	„	W. Smillie.	200237	„	G. Ure.
200052	C.S.M.	J. Smith.	2175	Pte.	A. Waddell.
203287	Pte.	J. Smith.	55876	„	C. Wallace.
200088	Sgt.	P. Smith.	1366	„	J. Wallace.
18274	Cpl.	W. Smith.	2992	„	J. Watt.
2514	Pte.	W. Smith.	200236	L/C.	A. Watson.
1884	L/C.	P. Smith.	2129	Pte.	D. Watson.
1241	Pte.	W. Smith.	3633	„	D. Weir.
29061	„	J. Smullen.	200834	„	C. Wilkinson.
1665	„	F. Smythe.	27486	„	J. Wilson.
1443	„	J. Spears.	201388	„	R. Wilson.
4156	„	J. Speirs.	200981	„	T. Wilson.
99	„	W. Spence.	6487	„	R. Wilson.
200042	„	B. Stafford.	1378	Cpl.	W. Wood.
1319	„	T. Stark.	200192	Pte.	A. Wotherspoon,
200593	„	A. Steele.			D.C.M.
1866	„	A. Steven.	201716	„	J. Wyne.
55900	„	R. Stewart.	42728	„	W. Yorkston.

## APPENDIX III

### HONOURS AND AWARDS.

#### (A) OFFICERS.

*Companion of the Bath.*

Colonel F. L. MORRISON.

*Companion of Saint Michael and Saint George.*

Lieut.-Col. J. B. NEILSON.

*The Distinguished Service Order.*

Colonel F. L. MORRISON.

Major D. E.<sup>5</sup> BRAND.

Lieut.-Col. J. B. NEILSON.

Major J. A. FINDLAY.

*The Military Cross.*

Captain J. D. BLACK.

Captain L. MACLELLAN.

Captain N. R. CAMPBELL.

Captain R. H. MORRISON.

Captain T. A. FYFE.

Captain J. T. TULLOCH.

Captain E. M. LEITH.

Captain L. H. WATSON.

Captain A. R. MACEWAN.

Lieut. I. CARMICHAEL.

Lieut. R. L. SWEET.

*Bar to the Military Cross.*

Captain R. H. MORRISON.

*Order of the British Empire.*

Captain V. B. STEWART.

*Croix de Guerre.*

Lieut. D. M. PITCHFORD.

*Italian Silver Medal.*

Captain W. BECKETT.

*Chevalier of the Order of Avis.*

Captain E. M. LEITH.

*Chevalier of the Crown of Roumania.*

Captain E. M. LEITH.

*Mentioned in Despatches.*

Colonel F. L. MORRISON, C.B., D.S.O., V.D.

Lieut.-Col. J. B. NEILSON, C.M.G., D.S.O.

Major D. E. BRAND, D.S.O.

Major J. A. FINDLAY, D.S.O.

Captain W. BECKETT.

Captain N. R. CAMPBELL, M.C.

Captain E. M. LEITH, M.C.

Captain JOHN MACDONALD.

Captain R. H. MORRISON, M.C.

Captain J. T. TULLOCH.

Captain and Q.M. T. CLARK.

Lieut. J. S. AGNEW.

Lieut. W. CUMMING.

2nd Lieut. J. W. MALCOLM.

## (B) OTHER RANKS.

*The Victoria Cross.*

43247 Sgt. D. F. HUNTER.

*The Distinguished Conduct Medal.*

1854 R.S.M. J. Mathieson.	201725 Pte. C. Devany.
200244 R.S.M. M. Mackean.	40666 „ J. Fleming.
200010 C.S.M. J. Coubrough.	41617 „ W. Gray.
200239 C.S.M. T. G. Milne.	55770 „ W. Jones.
200238 C.S.M. J. J. Twentyman.	200825 „ J. MacEwan.
203295 Sgt. J. Bryden.	203406 „ D. MacFarlane.
24344 „ J. Campbell.	200062 „ J. Phillips.
200375 „ W. MacGroarty.	201303 „ L. Urquhart.
200474 „ G. Meiklejohn.	203296 „ W. Webster.
1567 „ J. Melrose.	200192 „ A. Wotherspoon.
200027 „ W. Sykes.	

*The Military Medal.*

201733 Sgt. J. Black.	200877 Cpl. J. Davidson.
200846 „ J. Creek.	200158 „ J. W. Field.
200160 „ J. Glover.	200869 „ H. Masterton.
200015 „ R. Lyon.	202105 „ M. Stevenson.
200377 „ J. Logan.	200553 L/C. A. G. Ross.
200811 „ C. C. MacLean.	201014 „ I. Ross.
200992 „ J. MacNaught.	50155 Pte. J. Alford.
201215 „ J. Malley.	55802 „ N. Auld.
200266 „ D. Smith.	55853 „ E. Booth.

200307	Pte.	G. Clark.	40490	Pte.	D. Mitchell.
200844	,,	J. Drummond.	200270	,,	D. Pirie.
200351	,,	W. Earl.	201534	,,	A. Robertson.
27648	,,	R. Gavin.	200066	,,	S. Ross.
21306	,,	S. Irvine.	202105	,,	T. Stroyan.
201093	,,	J. Lamb.			

*The Meritorious Service Medal.*

200463	R.Q.M.S.	G. JENNISON.
200201	Sgt.	F. C. CAMERON.
200777	Sgt.	T. MARTIN.
200683	Sgt.	A. PATERSON.

*Croix de Guerre.*

1567 Sgt. J. MELROSE.

*Medaille Militaire.*

200094 Sgt. G. DOWNIE.

*Medaille d'Honneur.*

200896 Pte. J. KINNIBURGH.

*The Russian Cross of St. George, 4th Class.*

200099 Sgt. J. WADDELL.

*Serbian Silver Star, 2nd Class.*

200239 C.S.M. T. J. MILNE.  
1494 Pte. R. REID.

*Mentioned in Despatches.*

200366	R.S.M.	J. MATHIESON.
200274	R.S.M.	D. MACLAREN.
200012	R.Q.M.S.	F. W. ADAMS.
200230	C.S.M.	J. ANGUS.
200451	Cpl.	J. NOLAN.
200324	L/Cpl.	R. BULLOCH.
200681	L/Cpl.	E. HAMIL.
2968	Pte.	J. M'EWAN.
1567	Pte.	J. MELROSE.



## APPENDIX IV

### TURKISH ORDERS FOR ADVANCE ON ROMANI.

The following is a translation of Turkish orders, found on prisoners captured near Katia in July, 1916 :

#### MILITARY.

##### *GENERAL ORDERS—Infantry and Machine-Guns.*

1. I expect every officer, of whatever grade, to give an example of courage to his subordinates. I expect the rank and file to show the superiority of Turks to British troops, as their comrades have done at Gallipoli and in Irak.
2. Men are to make all possible use of entrenching tools and sandbags during attack and defence.
3. Since a continuous supply of S.A.A. cannot be effected, great economy is to be observed in its expenditure. Consequently both in attack and defence fire must be opened only at short ranges.
4. Flanking detachments must exercise the utmost vigilance against flank attacks. Owing to the enemy's great strength in Cavalry, great vigilance is imperative. On this account unsupported wings must dig in as deeply as possible.
5. The effect of the enemy's fire on our firing line must be communicated to the neighbouring Artillery and M.G. Officers, who are ordered to support our firing line.  
If the firing line is not so supported, the effect of the enemy's fire is to be communicated to the O.C. Infantry for transmission to the Artillery and M.G. Companies, so that the effect of the enemy's fire may be countered by Artillery or M.G. assistance to our troops.
6. Infantry must be provided with pistols, firing flares, and red signalling flags. Our artillery will thus be better enabled to lengthen their ranges.

7. Our own positions must be indicated by triangular red cloths in wooden frames, which, however, must not be visible to the enemy.
8. Owing to the close nature of the country and the frequency of mist (haze) in the morning, constant communication must be kept up with the first line to avoid accidents from the fire of our own guns.
9. Two Modjidies for every soldier bringing in an enemy rifle.

#### CAVALRY.

1. In close country, with many hills and obstacles, our reconnaissances will have a good opportunity of observing the enemy's movements and camps, beginning with his actual front.  
£T.5 reward for all valuable information about the enemy.
2. Reconnoitring parties must do all in their power to capture prisoners. £T.5 reward per head.
3. As there are no cavalry, reconnaissances will be carried out under the direction of mounted officers by Beduins attached to them.

#### ARTILLERY.

1. In the case of entrenched positions. The Turkish Mountain Gun, firing Austrian Mtn. Gun Shell is to be used against moving (or movable) targets in the enemy's lines, while the German Heavy Guns are to be employed against the entrenched positions thereof.
  2. As shell is scarce and can only be replaced with great difficulty, great economy is to be displayed by the Artillery.
  3. (Obscure.)
  4. Among the chief duties of O.C. Batteries will be choice of observation stations. With this object, when required, the O.C. Battery will leave his Battery and observe fearlessly, keeping up communication with his Battery by telephone over the intervening space.
  5. To prevent dust caused by discharge betraying gun positions, mats are to be spread under the muzzle of each gun.
  6. During prolonged infantry encounters O.C.'s of Infantry Units will send officers to observe the effect of the Turkish Mountain Batteries and Austrian shells on the enemy's firing line.
-

H.Q. 1ST EXPEDITIONARY FORCE,  
July 9th, 1916.

### ORDERS FOR ADVANCE FROM EL ARISH.

1. The regulations regarding the march have been explained in previous orders.
2. Fresh orders will be issued to the advanced guard on reaching the line Oghratina—Hod-el-Messia—Mugheibra and to the detachment proceeding to Bir-el-Abd.

The orders issued on July 8th, 1916, refer to the advance from El Arish.

### THE MARCH.

1. The march under war conditions commences from El Arish, *i.e.* it being probable that hostile reconnaissances will be encountered, the advance must be effected with the necessary screen. There being a Turkish Detachment at Bir-el-Mazar, up to this point precautions need be observed. From Bir-el-Mazar the war zone commences. From this point it is necessary to separate the advanced guard and main body and send reconnoitring detachments ahead of the advanced guard.
2. Silence is to be strictly observed on the march. Special attention must be paid to this by troops moving along the shore. Orders must be given quietly during night marches. No smoking at night and no use to be made, if possible, of electric torches after Bir-el-Mazar.
3. It is probable that units moving along the shore may be exposed to the fire of enemy ships. In this event troops will take to the nearest cover in an orderly manner without waiting for orders.
4. Every precaution must be taken to facilitate the march, *e.g.* collars, shirts, head-covering to be opened, boots to be removed.

To prevent confusion among the units on the march, the intervals by day must be increased to 100 metres. Files must be opened to give the men air. They must be closed at night and all straggling stopped immediately.

To take advantage of the cool nights to cover long distances, halts must be shortened.

As a rule the troops will march between 6 and 7 p.m. till 11 p.m. After a halt from 11 p.m. to 1 a.m. they will proceed so as to reach their destination by 7 a.m. After every 100 minutes marching troops to halt 20 minutes. Men and animals to be given "a breather" (*soluk molasi*) after passing through difficult ground.

5. Draught oxen to be watered at every watering place.

6. In difficult ground where guns and carts cannot be moved by the teams, they will have to be hauled by guy ropes attached to the wheels. Where planks have been laid down the assistance of men (hauling) is necessary. It is every C.O.'s duty and "his honour" (sheref) to render the maximum assistance to guns and carts in difficult ground. On such ground limbers and carts will have to be emptied if necessary.

Infantry *must* assist artillery in the above manner. Artillery Officers must inform Infantry Officers of extent of their requirements in men for haulage, and Infantry Officers must obey instructions under this head issued by their C.O.'s or by Artillery Officers.

### INSTRUCTIONS.

1. In order to minimise the results of aeroplane bombs, tents in encampments are to be scattered and distributed over a considerable area. Men, animals and transport to be divided into small groups.
2. As enemy aircraft are likely to fly above our camps between 4 a.m. and 7 a.m. and between 5 p.m. and 7 p.m., and to take our tents as targets, on the approach of enemy aircraft being reported, troops will disperse in small groups (which are then to remain stationary) for some hundred yards away from the centre of the camp. O.C.'s are to select positions for infantry and machine gun fire against aircraft attacking camps.

No other units (except those detailed for the purpose) are to fire on enemy aircraft, and machine-gun and infantry fire is not to be employed against aeroplanes flying very high.

3. All existing means, and any which can be improvised are to be employed to protect (men) against the sun, and measures must be taken to meet cases in which tents are insufficient.
4. As far as Bir-el-Mazar, the covering troops need not be in great strength. Beyond Bir-el-Mazar the covering forces must be strengthened and precautions organised against surprise.

Patrols and sentries must be posted during daylight on all dominating points, and Beduin camel scouts sent out to observe enemy movements and report in time to the O.C.

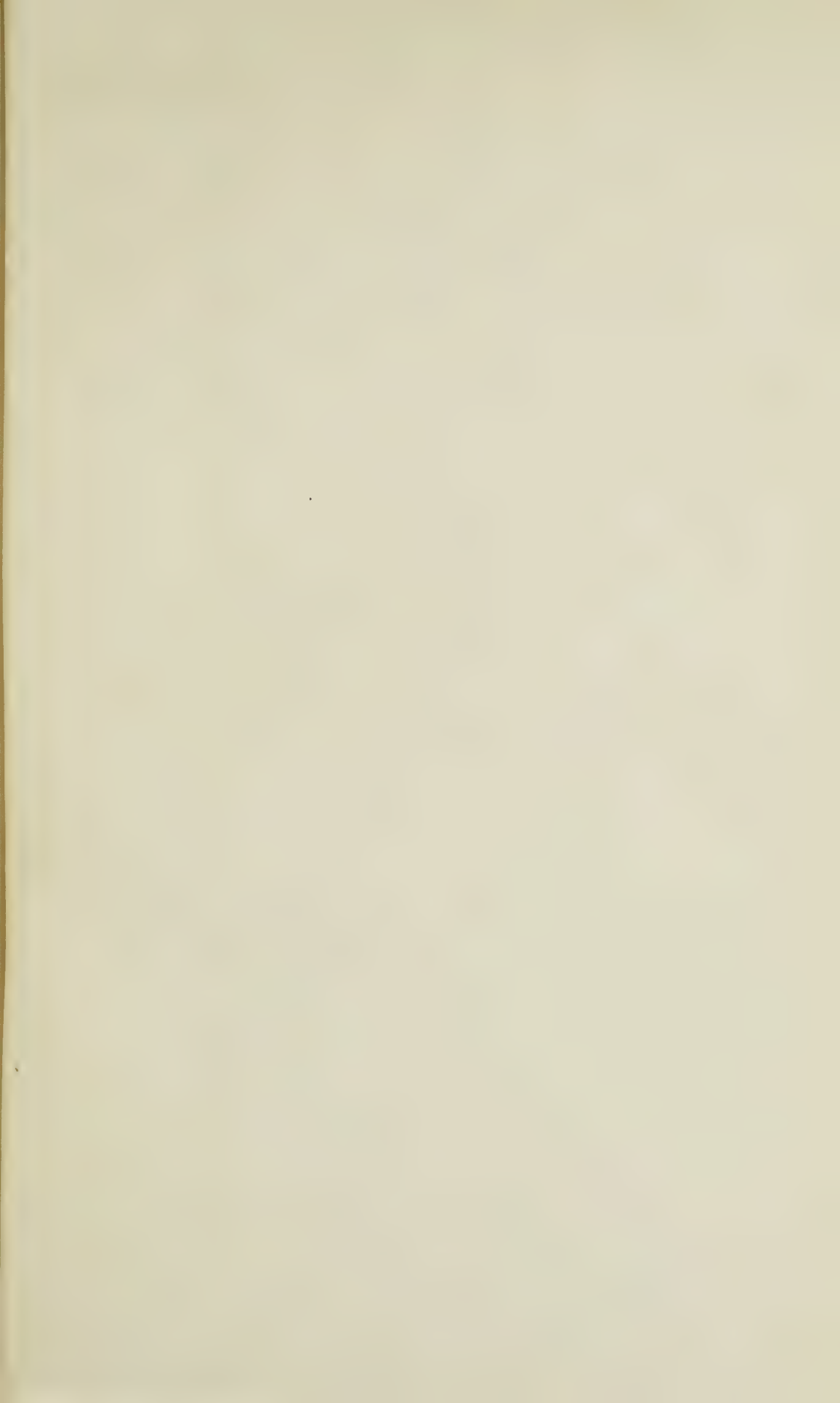
In case of surprise the (situation of the) rallying points fixed upon must be carefully kept in mind. These positions must be shown to Officers who are Second-in-Command (lit. Assistant C.O.'s) and must be defensively organised.

5. To avoid discovery by enemy aircraft, tents are to be covered with earth, mud, scrub, etc.
6. Near camps "simili-camps" (Dummy Camps) are to be pitched in order to attract the attention of aircraft. Holes are to be dug in the earth to simulate tents.



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7. When the troops are resting a few sentries are to be posted the better to protect their repose.
8. In order to mark the whereabouts of C.O.'s and other high officers, special indications must be placed on their quarters (tents).
9. In cases where detachments are separated by a considerable distance, roads are to be indicated by simple signs.
10. On enemy aeroplanes coming in sight all ranks will lie down, and try to bury themselves in the sand (Kumlar arasinda kendilerini gyome jek dir) in order to avoid fragments of bombs.











606967

Original Trench

M. E. Mott

E.C.

BRICK

CONCRETE

BRICK







